

THE
MIRACLES OF CHRIST

WITH

EXPLANATORY OBSERVATIONS, AND ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM MODERN TRAVELS.

INTENDED FOR THE YOUNG.

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and which are often called the "laws of nature:" some of these laws are known and understood by us; of others, the wisest men are ignorant. A miracle is a work out of the common course of these laws, and can only be effected by the direct and manifest interposition of Divine power. The word "miracle," in its original sense, is of the same import as "wonder:" not that all wonderful events are miracles. An event may happen both strange and unaccountable, but that does not prove it to be miraculous, since it may arise out of ordinary laws which are to us unknown. Before, therefore, we pronounce any thing which is extraordinary to be a miracle, we must first inquire, whether or not it is in accordance with the ordinary laws of the universe. Many things that were formerly considered miraculous by the ignorant, are now known not to be so: the light of science has made plain what was once dark and mysterious. An earthquake, which swallows up a city, is a wonderful event, but it is not a miracle. When a comet moved across the heavens, the common people formerly regarded it with dismay; the nature and course of comets are now, however, better understood. When the moon passes between the earth and the sun, causing darkness at noon-day; or when the rainbow shows its brilliant colours on the clouds, though many even in our day may regard them with awe, they are only effects of well-known causes.

"Were a physician to cure a blind man by anointing his eyes with an ointment, which we had never before seen, and to the nature and effects of which we were quite strangers, the cure might be considered wonderful; but we could not

say it was miraculous, because, for any thing we know, it might be only the natural effect of the ointment on the eyes. But were he to give sight to a blind man merely by commanding him to see, or by anointing his eyes with spittle, we should, with the utmost confidence, pronounce the cure to be a miracle; for we know that neither the human voice, nor human spittle, has any such power over the diseases of the eye."

The Jews expected that all who claimed to be prophets should prove their mission by some visible sign, as did Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and others. For when the common course of things is changed, it is a *sign* that the person who can alter it must act by the power of God, who first settled and still governs all things. Miracles, therefore, were regarded as evidence of the truth of doctrines: for it is certain God would not lend his aid to deceive his creatures, by permitting miracles to be done in proof of that which is false.

A Divine promise had been given to Moses, that a great Prophet should be raised up for the people of Israel; and it was foretold, that when he appeared he should be known by the greatness and variety of the miracles he wrought. By these *signs* he should be distinguished from all pretenders. Isaiah foretold, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing," Isa. xxxv. 5, 6: see also Isa. xlii. 7. Jesus appealed to these results as the evidence that he was from God: see Luke vii. 21, 22; John iii. 2; v. 36; ix. 31, 33; x. 25, 37; Acts xi. 22.

If we refer to these passages, we shall see the

great design of the Saviour's miracles. They were not done merely, nor chiefly, for the benefit of those who received relief; (God can and does now fully compensate for a defect or suffering by some blessing;) much less to excite wonder, and gratify curiosity: they were the *signs* that God approved him; that he was *the* Prophet—the Messiah. They were also the evidence that what he taught was true; and were intended to call the attention of the people to the doctrines he made known.

There have, however, been impostors in almost every age of the world, who have pretended to work miracles, and have deceived many with their "lying wonders," 2 Thess. ii. 9; Matt. xxiv. 24; and because of these false signs, some persons have doubted whether real miracles were ever performed. But, as Pascal says, "Instead of arguing from the false miracles against the true, we ought, on the contrary, to infer the true from the false. I conclude that there never could have been false miracles, but on account of others which were true. For were there nothing of the kind, it had been impossible for men to have devised such things, and more impossible for others to have believed them." There would be no counterfeit coin, if there were not real coin. Bishop Douglas, Dr. Campbell, and other writers, have shown that the miracles of the Scripture are supported by evidence widely different from that which is brought forward to support those that are false.

The prodigies said to have been done in ancient times, in pagan countries, as well as those asserted of Romish saints, may be thus classed: 1, they were either natural events, which the ignorance of the age did not understand; or, 2, they were

frauds contrived by designing men; or, 3, they are destitute of evidence, being represented to have been done in secret, or else recorded in ages long after the time.

Infidels have searched the pages of history to discover any remarkable incidents which might prejudice the miracles of Scripture. The Roman historian Tacitus relates, that it was commonly believed that the emperor Vespasian had wrought two miracles; they have, therefore, seized upon the narrative, and have boldly, though falsely, asserted that the evidence in their favour is as strong as for those recorded in Scripture. The contrast, however, is singular and instructive.

The historian states, that the emperor Vespasian cured a blind man by means of his spittle, and a lame man by touching him with his foot. Now, where is the evidence for these cures? Tacitus does not profess to have been an eye witness of the transactions; he only gives them upon report: he does not say that he believed them himself; and he even speaks with contempt of the Egyptian god, through whose power they were stated to have been wrought. While another historian, Suetonius, declares that the whole was a fraud, planned to establish the new emperor in his authority. He had been raised from a humble station to the highest earthly honour, and he wished to secure the reverence of the people. The account has been fully examined, and shown to be wanting in the marks which prove a real miracle, by Bishop Douglas, in his *Criterion of Miracles*; Dr. Campbell, in his *Dissertation on Miracles*; and Dr. Paley, in his *Evidences of Christianity*.

Another instance of deception will be found in

the case of Mohammed, who said he was sent by God to reveal his will more perfectly than it had been made known by Moses, or our Lord Jesus. This false prophet declared, that one night, when lying on his bed, he was carried to heaven; that he was borne upward through a succession of heavens, and placed in the immediate presence of God, where he beheld many wonders, which would have occupied a long time only rapidly to glance at each; yet, he says, such was the quickness of his flight to the highest glory, and back again, that a pitcher of water, which he overturned when leaving his room, had not fully run out when he arrived safely again in his chamber. He had been to heaven, seen many wonders there, and returned from his journey, in the space of a few seconds! How unlike is this to the narratives of the Scripture! For who saw Mohammed go to heaven? There was not one witness of his flight. When was it done? In the darkness of the night. What is it intended to teach? It teaches nothing; it illustrates no doctrine. What is its use? It answers no useful end whatever. Nor shall we be the more ready to believe it, because his uncle, who was one of his chief disciples, threatened, "O prophet! whosoever rises against thee, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, and kill him." It was in this spirit of deceit and violence, that the followers of the false prophet forced their religion on the nations around them.

In contrast with the vague testimony of the historian Tacitus, and the conduct of the followers of Mohammed, let us place the testimony and conduct of the disciples of our Saviour. They were the chief witnesses of his miracles, and

appealed as honest men to what they had seen. They had beheld not one or two wonders wrought, but a large number. Nor could they be deceived in them, for they were such as might be examined and tested. They knew the blameless life of their Master, and were sure he would not deceive them; and because they knew his miracles were real, they, without delay, went forth, and declared them to the world—in the same age and country in which they were wrought.

They also put the accounts into writing, and then placed them in the hands not only of friends, but of enemies, to be examined. And these enemies were men of learning and power; skilful to detect fraud, and powerful to expose it; and who were on the watch to find out any thing by which they might destroy the credit of their records. Instead of denying that these miracles were done, the Jewish opposers admitted that they were truly wrought; and the only explanation they attempted to give of them was, by saying they were the works of Satan—done by his power, and to accomplish his wicked designs!

The truth of the miracles, however, does not rest on the statements of the apostles only: there were thousands of witnesses; for these things were “not done in a corner.” In the highway, and open street, in village, town, and city; in market-places, synagogues, and the temple: publicly, in open day-light, surrounded by multitudes, the Saviour wrought his miracles. Nor were the people mere spectators: in one instance, upwards of five thousand, and in another more than four thousand, shared in them. Large numbers were healed in the same evening, or at the same hour of the day

Here were the blind, now in the full enjoyment of sight; the maimed, in the possession of their limbs; those once deaf, dumb, leprous, palsied, paralysed, dropsical, possessed by Satan, and dead—all witnesses of the reality of their miraculous cures.

There are persons who will not believe any thing unusual and strange, unless they see it for themselves. An emperor of Siam, when told by the ambassador from the Dutch, that in Holland the water became hard from the effect of cold, and that it then bore men, wagons, and horses, on its surface, replied, in anger: "It is false and impossible, for no such thing was ever seen in Siam!" Similar is the folly of those who disbelieve miracles, because they have never seen them wrought.

The young reader has never been to the arctic regions, where the sun does not rise for months together, and where perpetual snow covers the ground: he has not seen the great wall of China; or the pyramids in Egypt; or Mount Hecla, in Iceland; yet he does not doubt that there are such places and objects. He may never have looked through a telescope powerful enough to show him that the sun has, on its surface, spots much larger than the earth; or that the planet Saturn is encircled by an immense ring, many thousand miles broad; or that the whitish spots seen at night in a clear sky, are the reflection of thousands of sparkling suns; or that the stars are of many different and beautiful colours. The accounts of these things, when first heard, are to us wonderful: we have not seen them with our own eyes, yet we credit the

word of those who state these facts, because they are persons of good character, and have no interest in telling us a falsehood. Julius Cesar once ruled the Roman empire, and gained many victories; Alfred the Great was king of England, and was a wise and good king; Napoleon Buona-partie reigned over the French, and at length died in the island of St. Helena. How do we know that such persons ever lived, and did the actions recorded of them? From the records of history; and a man would be thought very ignorant, or else quite insane, who would not believe such testimony. In the same way, we receive the accounts of the miracles; they are undoubtedly matters of history, and we judge of them as we should of any other historical records; and it has been shown that they are supported by far surer evidence than that which we have for any other history in the world.

“A miracle,” says Dr. Bogue, “to those who see it, is an object of sense. To those who have not seen it, the evidence must arise from testimony: the testimony of the person who performed the miracle, the testimony of those on whom it was performed, or the testimony of the people who were eye witnesses of it. All these may be combined with such force in proof of a miracle, that if their united testimony be rejected, we can have no certainty of any thing whatever. There are no ancient events which have such a weight of evidence in their favour, as the miracles of Christ and his apostles.”

If it be asked, Why do we not see miracles now? it may be replied, For this simple reason: they have fulfilled the end for which they were

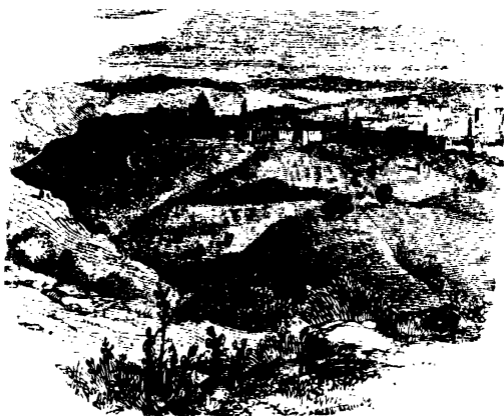
designed, and are not now necessary. They were intended to confirm a revelation from God. While that revelation was being made, through a number of ages, they were wrought; but now it is completed, they are withdrawn. The will of God is clearly declared in the Bible; that holy book contains all that is necessary for us to know and believe; and therefore, as there is no further revelation, there is no occasion for any more signs and wonders to confirm it. "It is probable, if they were continued, they would be of no use, because those persons who refuse to be convinced by the miracles recorded in the New Testament, would not be convinced by any new ones: for it is not from want of evidence, but from want of sincerity, and out of passion and prejudice, that any man rejects the miracles related in the Scripture; and the same want of sincerity, the same passions and prejudices, would make him resist any proof, any miracle whatever. A perpetual power of working miracles, would in all ages lead to numerous impostures, while it would unsettle all the laws of Providence."*

Signs and wonders are now wrought; but they are moral, not physical miracles—mind is operated on, not matter. When the wicked are turned from sin to holiness, and unbelievers are brought to live a life of faith, then are seen proofs of the power of God.

The recorded miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ claim our frequent study. They are related in the Gospels with great simplicity and brevity, and form a most interesting and instructive part of the

* Bishop Newton; Rev. T. H. Horne.

word of God. No human comment can add to their beauty, or render them more impressive: yet it has been thought, that by placing them in the form of a continuous narrative, and pointing out some of the lessons they teach, the young in families, and the elder scholars in schools, might be led to turn to the sacred page more frequently, and with increased profit and delight. A few illustrations, drawn from the manners, customs, and topography of the east, are added as notes.



MODERN JERUSALEM.

MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

RECORDED BY

<i>Miracle.</i>	<i>Where wrought.</i>	<i>Matthew.</i>	<i>Mark.</i>	<i>Luke.</i>	<i>John.</i>
Water turned into wine.....	Cana	—	—	—	ii. 1—11
Many buyers and sellers cast out of the temple.....	Jerusalem	—	—	—	ii. 13—17
Miracles at the passover	Jerusalem	—	—	—	ii. 23
Nobleman's son restored	Cana	—	—	—	iv. 46—54
Miraculous draught of fishes.....	Sea of Galilee.....	—	—	v. 1—11	—
Demoniac restored	Capernaum	—	i. 21—28	iv. 31—37	—
Peter's mother-in-law healed	Capernaum	viii. 14, 15	i. 29—31	iv. 38, 39	—
Many miracles on the evening of a sabbath	Capernaum	viii. 16, 17	i. 32—34	iv. 40—42	—
Miracles wrought in towns and villages	Galilee	iv. 23—25	—	—	—
Lepser healed	Capernaum	viii. 2—4	i. 40—45	v. 12—15	—
Many healed	Galilee	—	i. 45	v. 15	—
Paralytic healed	Capernaum	ix. 2—8	ii. 1—12	v. 17—26	—
Infirm man, at pool of Bethesda, restored	Jerusalem	—	—	—	v. 1—16
Man with a withered hand healed.....	Galilee	xii. 10—15	iii. 1—12	—	—
Many healed	Galilee	—	—	—	—
Centurion's servant healed	Capernaum	viii. 5—13	—	—	—
Son of a widow raised to life.....	Nain	—	—	—	—
Numbers cured in cities and villages	Galilee	ix. 35	—	—	—
Blind and dumb demoniac restored	Capernaum	xii. 22—30	—	—	—
The tempest stilled.....	Sea of Galilee.....	viii. 23—27	iv. 35—41	viii. 22—25	—
Demoniacs dispossessed.....	Gadara	viii. 28—34	v. 1—20	viii. 26—39	—
Daughter of Jairus raised	Capernaum	ix. 18, 19, 23—26	v. 22—24, 35—43	viii. 41, 42, 49—56	—

Woman, diseased with issue of blood, healed	Capernaum	ix. 20—22	v. 25—34	viii. 43—48	—
Two blind men restored to sight	Capernaum	ix. 37—31	—	—	—
Dumb spirit cast out	Capernaum	ix. 32—34	—	—	—
Five thousand fed	Decapolis	xiv. 13—21	vi. 31—44	ix. 10—17	vi. 5—14
Jesus walks on the sea	Sea of Galilee	xiv. 22—31	vi. 45—51	—	vi. 15—21
Many healed	Land of Gennesaret	xiv. 34—36	vi. 54—56	—	—
Woman of Canaan's daughter restored	(coasts of Tyre)	xv. 21—28	vii. 24—30	—	—
Deaf and dumb man cured	Decapolis	—	vii. 31—37	—	—
Various miracles	Near the Sea of Galilee	xv. 29—31	—	—	—
Four thousand fed	Decapolis	xv. 32—39	viii. 1—9	—	—
Blind man restored to sight	Bethsaida	—	viii. 22—26	—	—
Ⓒ Roy, possessed of a devil, restored	Near Cesarea Philippi	xvii. 14—21	ix. 14—29	ix. 37—42	—
Miracle to pay the tribute money	Capernaum	xvii. 24—27	—	—	—
Man, born blind, healed	Jerusalem	—	—	—	ix. 1—41
Woman, of eighteen years' infirmity, cured	Galilee	—	—	xiii. 10—17	—
Dropsical man healed	Galilee	—	—	xiv. 1—6	—
Ten lepers cleansed	Borders of Samaria	—	—	xvii. 11—19	—
Lazarus raised from the dead	Bethany	xx. 29—34	x. 46—52	xviii. 35—43	xi. 1—46
Two blind beggars restored to sight	Jericho	xxi. 12, 13	xi. 15—19	xix. 45, 46	—
Buyers and sellers again cast out	Jerusalem	xxi. 14	—	—	—
Many miracles in the temple	Jerusalem	xxi. 17—22	—	—	—
Barren fig-tree withered	Mount Olivet	xxvi. 51—54	xv. 12—24	—	—
Ear of Malchus healed	Gethsemane	xxvii. 51—53	xiv. 46—50	xxii. 47—51	xviii. 1—10
Miracles at the crucifixion	Near Jerusalem	—	xv. 38	xxiii. 44, 45	—
Wondrous draught of fishes	Sea of Galilee	—	—	—	xxi. 1—14



CANA OF GALILEE.

CHAPTER II.

Water turned into wine at Cana of Galilee—Eastern weddings—The mother of Jesus—Well of Cana—Governor of the feast—The miracle—Its reality—Cheerful benevolence of the Saviour's character—True religion is cheerful—Profanation of the temple—Buyers and sellers cast out—Many miracles—A nobleman's son cured—All are liable to affliction—Sickness overruled for good.

WATER TURNED INTO WINE AT CANA.

JOHN ii. 1—11.

OUR Lord, when he entered on his public ministry, collected a few disciples around him. Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael, were those who first

became his followers. They had been with him only three days, when Jesus, with his disciples, was invited to a wedding feast in the village of Cana.

This humble village is in that division of the Holy Land which was the portion of the sons of Zebulun. It was called Cana of Galilee, to distinguish it from another Cana, which belonged to the tribe of Asher, Josh. xix. 28. It is built on the side of a hill, overlooking a pleasant valley, and now contains only a few houses. Near the entrance of the village, by the roadside, is a flowing spring, which yields to the native and the traveller a bountiful supply of pure water: it gushes over the sides of a broken wall which encloses it, and forms a little streamlet to make fruitful the valley beneath. A few trees shelter the "well of Cana," as is common in eastern lauds, that the weary traveller may recline under their shade while he partakes of the water of the well.

Our Saviour did not refuse the friendly invitation; his disciples were not to suppose that to be a follower of him would make them unhappy, and deprive them of the pleasant intercourse of life. On all occasions we find he joined in the customs of the country that were not sinful. Among others, who were invited, was "the mother of Jesus:" she is mentioned not by the name of Mary; but, according to the domestic custom of the east, her own name is dropped, and she is called by the name of her first-born son.

An eastern wedding is always public, and is an occasion of great joy: many are invited; not only the friends and neighbours, but sometimes even the travellers who may be lodging in the

neighbourhood. The more numerous the company, the greater honour is thought to be conferred on the parties. If the young couple are rich, they spend large sums of money in honour of their marriage; if poor, they will exert themselves to the utmost to provide supplies for the occasion. The wealthy prepare costly dresses, which the bridegroom sends as a present to the bride; and they change their robes several times in the day, in compliment to each other, the last robe being always more beautiful than the preceding. The psalmist refers to the splendour of these dresses, when he compares the sun to a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, sparkling and shining with jewels and gold, *Psa. xix. 5.*

The wedding at Cana, however, we may suppose was not of this splendid kind: the parties were in more humble life. Yet even people in a middling condition invited a large number of guests.

During the cheerful festivities of the occasion, it was discovered that the wine was nearly exhausted. There may have been more friends present than were expected, and as the feast commonly continued for seven days, it was not an unlikely circumstance that the provisions should fail: especially as the presence of Jesus may have drawn many to the house. Mary appears to have taken an active part in the feast; and to prevent the deficiency being exposed to the company, and even before the governor of the feast was aware of it, it was made known to her. She addressed her son with confidence; for though this was the first of his public miracles, she may have seen such displays of his power in private life, as convinced her he could do what he pleased; and

she knew he was so kind, that he was always willing to help those in need.

His answer was a gentle reproof: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." This reply may appear to us at first unkind and rude, but it was according to the mode of address in those times. The title "woman" was formerly addressed by princes to ladies of the highest rank: an emperor has been known thus to address his mother, without intending any disrespect; and it was even the humble style of slaves when speaking to their mistresses. It would, however, be wrong for the young to speak to a mother in this way now; because different modes of address are used in different countries and ages; and the meaning and use of words become changed in the course of time. We may be sure that our Lord would never have spoken harshly to his mother, nor have needlessly said a word to grieve her heart. He is an example to us of obedience to parents, Luke ii. 51. He, on this occasion, used the same word that he did when hanging on the cross, and seeing his mother and the beloved disciple standing at its foot, he said, "Woman, behold thy son," John xix. 26: see also John xx. 15. The meaning of his reply seems to have been this: "Mother, be not over anxious; I know what I will do; when the proper moment has come, I will supply all your need." But he may also have wished her to know, that though as a son he was subject to her in private life; as the Son of God, his power was not under her control: his miracles were to be wrought for a higher object than to gratify earthly connexions; and he knew best when his power

should be displayed. In this view it is a powerful testimony against the idolatrous worship the church of Rome pays to the mother of our Lord.

Mary yielded, without taking offence; she did not understand that she was denied; for, in expectation that he would meet their wants, she directed the servants to do whatever he commanded.

The wine was now nearly gone; the credit of the family was at stake: then it was that the time had really come for the miracle to be wrought.

It was the custom of the Jews often to wash their hands at their meals; they had "divers washings," Mark vii. 4: for this purpose large water-pots were always placed near at hand; and where the company was great, a large quantity of water would of course be in demand. And as in those days it was not so conveniently brought to their dwellings as it is in ours, it was carried from neighbouring wells by females, and kept in large jars or cisterns; as we are informed by travellers is still the custom.* These jars our Lord employed

at this day. These vessels are formed of clay, hardened by the heat of the sun, and are of a globular shape, and large at the mouth, not unlike the bottles used in our country for holding vitriol, but not so large. Many of them have handles attached to the sides; and it was a wonderful coincidence with Scripture that the vessels appeared to contain much about the same quantity as those which the evangelist informs us were employed at the celebration of the marriage which was honoured by the Saviour's presence: namely, three firkins, or about twelve gallons, each. The water of the well is pure as crystal,

in the miracle. He desired the servants to fill six of them with water. They readily obeyed filling them up to the brim. When this was done, he ordered them to draw out, and to bear it to the master of the feast.

The governor was surprised when he beheld the servants approach, bearing the well-filled flagons. He tasted the wine, and was still more astonished at the richness of its quality. From whence was it procured? His first thought may have been, that it was a pleasant device of the bridegroom, who had allowed the wine to run out, to embarrass his friend, and then to remove his alarm by suddenly bringing forward an ample supply. Similar devices, to create amusement, were not uncommon at ancient feasts. The bridegroom was called, and seriously asked why he had done contrary to the usual custom. Did not the bridegroom know that it was the general practice to give the richest wine first, when it could be best relished; and afterwards, towards the close, according to the temperate custom of the Jews, to lower the wine by mixing it with water?

“Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then and supplied by springs from the mountains.”—*Rae Wilson's Travels in the Holy Land*, vol. ii.

* It was the office of the governor, or ruler of the feast, to see to the comfort of the guests, and that every thing was done soberly and properly. He was called in Greek “architriclinus,” or “ruler of the feast:” he tasted the wine before it was placed on the table, though he was expressly required to maintain the greatest sobriety, and be an example of temperance. He gave directions to the servants, ordered how much each one was allowed to drink; and it was expected that the company should in all things comply with his regulations in the conducting of the entertainment.

that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." From this we are not to understand, when men were overcome with wine, but simply, when they had drunk enough to satisfy their real wants. Neither our Saviour, nor the sacred writer, would have given his sanction to the dreadful vice of drunkenness. Or, if intemperance were at any time found at these festivities, we cannot suppose it would be seen at a feast which was honoured by the presence of the holy Saviour; nor would he have furnished a new supply of wine if there had been any appearance of excess and riot. It should not be forgotten, that there may be enjoyment without intemperance and levity. Indeed, true pleasure is always found in moderation: every step beyond this tends to discomfort. Temperance, in eating and drinking, promotes our health and strength; but an immoderate use of food is injurious to body and mind. This is the law of our nature, and it is our wisdom to regulate our habits by it, and even totally to abstain, if we find there is danger of being led to excess.

We know not the effect which this miracle had on the newly married persons, or on the guests. It was not in vain, however, in respect to them. If they were led to believe in Christ, it was indeed a happy day in their history. If they were only filled with surprise and admiration, this display of the Saviour's power will witness against them in the last day. Whatever lingering doubts there had been on the minds of the disciples, they were now removed; they saw in the miracle the proof of Jesus being the Messiah, and they "believed on him."

1. Whilst our Lord's miracles have, in general, plain evidences of their reality, some are accompanied with particular proof. It is so in the miracle at the marriage of Cana. Deception was impossible. Wine casks, or leather bottles, were not used; or it might have been said they contained some dregs which gave a colouring and a taste, that led to a mistake on the part of those who drank. Common earthen jars were employed, those used for purification, of which the Jews were careful lest they should become polluted. Nor was there room for mixing a portion of real wine with their contents; they were filled up to the brim with water, and the evidence of the governor of the feast, as to the quality of the wine, removes such a suspicion. The quantity produced was considerable; it could not therefore be said that a small portion of the water was taken away, and the like quantity of wine secretly introduced. It was not done by a slow process, but in a moment, by the unuttered will of the Saviour: he does not appear even to have touched the pots. Nor were his disciples engaged in it; the servants of the house, who were not under his influence, were directed to fill and to draw out. And then, to prove that it was truly wine, it was first submitted to him whose office it was to judge of the quality of the food served to the guests. It is well to observe these marks, for as infidels are always ready to seize upon any pretence to justify their unbelief, it should be shown that the more closely the miracles of Christ are examined, the stronger is the evidence of their truth.

2. This display of power "manifested forth the

glory of Christ"—the glory of his Divine character. All nature is under his control, for he is "the great God," Tit. ii. 13, and has "all power in heaven and in earth," Matt. xxviii. 18. How small a work was it, then, for him to change water into wine! He at first created water by a word; and it was as easy, by a word, to change its nature, and give it the colour and taste of the juice of the grape.

3. While this miracle displays the dignity of Christ, as God, it also shows the cheerful benevolence of his character, as man. Though he is "over all, God blessed for ever," yet when in our nature on earth, he was so humble as to receive the invitations and bounty of his creatures. He gathered around him those whom he graciously called his friends, John xv. 15; he visited their homes, and joined in their social entertainments. How wonderful is this, that He who possessed all things, should submit to depend on the kindness of his followers! He not only graced this wedding with his presence; he sat down to meat in the house of a pharisee, Luke xi. 37; joined the family circle in the house of Martha, John xii. 1, 2; partook of the hospitality of Simon, who had been a leper, Matt. xxvi. 6; and shared the humble fare which a fisherman's cottage would afford, Matt. viii. 15. It was not that his bodily senses might be gratified; but by mixing with the common people he had the better opportunity of doing good.

4. Religion does not require us to shut ourselves out from the world, like monks and nuns, or to cherish gloomy feelings: it is social and cheerful. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her

paths are peace," Prov. iii. 17. It teaches us how to enjoy, as well as to obey. An author has remarked, "It is a much less virtue to fly from and bid adieu to the world, than to live usefully, righteously, and soberly, in the cheerful discharge of all those social duties for which man is made and fitted." God has given us "richly all things to enjoy," but not to abuse, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Let us, then, seek the presence of Jesus to be with us in all our hours of enjoyment: it will not spoil our pleasure; it will not restrain us from any thing, except sin.

BUYERS AND SELLERS CAST OUT OF THE TEMPLE.

JOHN ii. 13—17.

OUR Saviour, shortly after his first miracle, left Cana, and went to Jerusalem, to keep the pass-over. Born of the seed of Abraham, it became him to fulfil all righteousness, Matt. iii. 15. When he came to this great city, he went to the temple, and beheld the awful manner in which its sacred courts were profaned.

Under the pretence of having the sacrifices near at hand, and for the convenience of those Jews who came from distant parts, the court of the Gentiles was used as a place in which to buy and sell, and to change foreign coin into Jewish money. In addition to large numbers of doves, pigeons, and other offerings, 250,000 lambs were often killed during the festival. Besides, the way these traders transacted business was marked by fraud and imposition; so that, in the language of our Lord, this court of the temple became "a house of merchandize," and "a den of thieves."

Jesus, as he entered the courts of the temple, heard the clamour, and beheld the confusion and extortions of the dealers, and with holy anger he at once proceeded to exercise his sovereign power. Armed only with a whip, (probably made of the small cords with which the cattle were bound to the pillars of the court,) he drove out the buyers and sellers, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, declaring that his Father's house was the house of prayer. Struck with awe, although their number was great, they did not resist, but shrunk away under a sense of their guilt. "Why did not these multitudes stand upon their defence," says bishop Hall, "and wrest that whip out of the hand of a seemingly weak and unarmed prophet? Instead hereof they run away, like sheep, from before him; not daring to abide his presence, though his hand had been still. How easy is it for Him that made the heart, to put either terror or courage into it at pleasure! O Saviour, it was none of thy least miracles, that thou didst thus drive out a host of able offenders, in spite of their gain: their very profit had no power to stay them against thy frown."

The council of the Jews, who were interested in the profits derived from letting the courts of the temple to the dealers, now interposed, and inquired by what authority he acted. They demanded of him to show that he was a prophet. Jesus simply replied, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" referring to the death which they should inflict on his body, and the power by which he should raise himself from the dead. This should be to them a sign

that he was sent of God. He did not, however, leave them to this yet distant proof, for he soon gave clear evidence of his Divine mission. In passing among the crowd, he beheld the afflicted objects who commonly assembled among the doorways of the temple, Acts iii. 2; John ix. 8: as he looked on them, pity moved his heart to help them, and he healed them all.

As in the heavens there are stars whose lustre is clear to the eye, and which we can contemplate with pleasure, so there are also clusters of stars which we cannot inspect singly, on account of their number and distance; they float before our eyes like little white clouds: yet, could we gaze more nearly on these suns of the distant firmament, what new wonders should we discover! what increased proofs should we have of the power and wisdom of God! So, in the Gospels, there are miracles recorded on which we may fix our attention, and meditate at our leisure; but there are others, on which we are permitted to look only as they are clustered together: we have merely the reflection of their combined splendour. Did we know them all, what fresh discoveries should we have of the love and grace of Christ!

The fame of these miracles soon spread, and as there were many thousands assembled at the passover, from all parts of Judea, they carried home with them the tidings of the great things which they had seen and heard of the new Prophet who had appeared at Jerusalem.

A NOBLEMAN'S SON RESTORED.

JOHN iv. 46—54.

AFTER the passover, our Lord left Jerusalem, and went about the cities, towns, and villages* of Judea, preaching and teaching. He then directed his way towards Galilee, passing through Samaria; where, as he sat on Jacob's well, wearied with his journey, he spoke to the woman of Sychar, John iv. On arriving in Galilee, he did not go to "his own city," Nazareth,† for he knew that "a prophet hath no honour in his own country." The little city of Cana was again blessed with his presence, as here the recent miracle may have disposed the people to attend to his preaching. Another occasion soon arose for the exercise of his compassion.

A nobleman, who lived at Capernaum, a city about twenty miles from Cana, heard of his arrival in Galilee, and hastened to entreat him to come and heal his son, who appeared to be drawing nigh to death. This nobleman, it is supposed, was one of king Herod's courtiers, or, as the original word means, "a servant to a king." His affliction brought him to Christ as a petitioner. He had a beloved son—an only child—the heir to his estate, whose health had failed, and who now was likely to die. It may be that the father had seen the little sufferer's face grow pale, the eyes lose their brightness, and the breast throb with pain: all had been done that could be devised by human

* In Judea these were distinguished thus: cities were inclosed with walls, and were places of trade; towns possessed a synagogue, but were not inclosed or fortified; villages were country places, which had no regular synagogue.

† By the Jewish law, any man who resided in a city for twelve months, was regarded as a citizen: it became "his own city."

skill to save the life of his child, but the physicians had given up all hope. Oh! how the fond parent's heart must have sunk within him, when he was told that his darling boy must die! One only hope to him remained: he had heard of Jesus, or he might have seen him lately pass over that part of the country, and he thought if he could but obtain his aid the child might yet be saved.

It was well that this courtier did not scorn Jesus, like most of his countrymen. Great and rich as he was, and though he must have been grieved to leave the sick-bed of his child, he came himself to Christ. He did not send his servants; a father's love prompted him to become himself the humble suppliant. With haste he drew nigh, and earnestly besought our Lord that he would "come down, and heal his son." Here was faith; he thought that Christ could relieve the almost hopeless case: yet there was some unbelief lingering in his heart. He had perhaps come at a venture—as a last resource. Our Lord perceived that unbelieving thoughts were lingering in his heart; and, with a gentle reproof, said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Or this rebuke may have been addressed to the Jews that stood around. The Samaritans had just believed on his word, though he had wrought no miracle in their midst, John iv. 42; but of the Jews he once said, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign," Matt. xvi. 4: they were eager to have their curiosity gratified, while they cherished their unbelief.

And was this the only answer that was to be given to the anxious father? only a reproach! was

there no hope of assistance? He again urged his request; for thoughts of his dying child made him importunate: "Come down ere my child die."* He thought that Jesus must come down to the house, to see his son, and touch him, or pray over him, like Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 17—23, before the child could be healed; and he was fearful, if he should delay, that it would be too late.

Our Lord now showed him that he could heal his son as well at a distance as near at hand, and directed him to go home, for that his child would recover, and was now out of danger.

His faith triumphed: he did not stand to debate at the strange command to return alone to his home, nor did he ask, "What if, on my return, I find my beloved child a corpse!" Although it was the first instance in which Jesus had healed at a distance, he believed Christ's word; and instead of hurrying home that night, he appears, from the answer which his servants afterwards made, to have been only on the way to his house on the following day, when they met him with the welcome tidings. How different were the feelings that filled his heart as he trod his way homewards, to those he felt as he went up to Cana!

While the nobleman was away from his house, we may imagine the deep distress of those who attended on the dying boy, and their surprise at his sudden and unaccountable recovery. A poet has thus described the scene.

* "The expression 'Come down,' applied to Capernaum, is singularly illustrated by the features of the country: for, in fact, the whole route from Cana, according to the position of the place now so called, is a continued descent towards Capernaum."
—*Dr. E. Clarke's Travels.*

On life's last edge, relentless fever's prey,
 Stretch'd on his couch the youthful patient lay.
 Prepared to catch the spirit's parting sigh,
 And raise the wailing of the funeral cry,
 Around his bed, friends, kinsmen, servants, stand;
 Mark the pale lips, glazed eye, and burning hand;
 Tell each faint flutter, as the moments past,
 And think that each will prove the sufferer's last.

But what their transport! what their deep surprise!
 Light in a moment kindles in his eyes:
 His livid lips resume their ruby hue;
 And the warm blood, as well-tuned music true,
 Beats calm and strong. O'erjoy'd, o'erawed, they see
 The work surpassing nature's energy:
 The' effect they note; but none perceives or knows
 How that effect is wrought, or whence the blessing flows.

The servants, while on their way to Cana, to communicate the joyful news of the child's recovery, were met by the nobleman. The father anxiously inquired when he began to amend: they replied, that the fever left him at the seventh hour, about one o'clock in the afternoon of the preceding day. Overjoyed at these glad tidings, he knew it was the same hour that Jesus had said unto him, "Thy son liveth."

A benevolent mind finds delight in removing sorrow from the human heart, and in doing good to the body; but that pleasure is increased, should the removal of temporal distress be sanctified, and awaken a concern for the salvation of the soul. Such was the happy result in the house of the nobleman: "Himself believed, and his whole house." If our Lord had gone with the father, he would not have had such a proof of the Divine power; he might have thought that Christ's ability was limited by distance; but now he saw that neither disease nor distance could oppose his will. And when he related to his family the gracious way

in which the Saviour listened to his request, and when they saw before their eyes the answer that was given, they were filled with gratitude and love. They received his doctrines, owned his authority, and became his disciples; and to this nobleman was granted the honour of being the first person of rank who received the faith.

1. This narrative teaches us, that the children of the rich are alike liable with the children of the poor, to affliction. In the mansions of the great are many youthful sufferers; and though they may lie on downy couches, and be surrounded with all the luxuries of life, yet in these they cannot find relief; and, at death, they are borne from the stately dwellings of their noble parents to the solitude and corruption of the grave. How important is it, then, that the youthful rich, and the youthful poor, should alike seek to Christ for his grace; so that, should they die in early life, they may ascend to render nobler service in heaven!

2. We also see, that affliction in a family is often overruled for good. It brought the nobleman to Christ: so it has thousands of all ranks. There has been sanctified affliction in a palace.

3. If, in the mercy of God, the young are raised from beds of affliction, let them devote their spared lives to the glory of Christ. Of those who are restored to health, how few render again according to the benefits done unto them! 2 Chron. xxxii. 25.



RUINS OF MAGDALA.

CHAPTER III.

Prophecy fulfilled—Christ preaches on the sea shore—Fishing in the night—Miraculous draught of fishes—Success of the apostles—Encouragement to labour—Demoniacs—A Demoniac restored—Satan's malice and power—Christ's visit to Simon and Andrew—Simon's wife's mother healed—Piety at home—Gratitude for mercies—Miracles on the sabbath evening—The Saviour's devotions.

OUR Lord left Cana, and went to reside at Capernaum, "which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim," according to the word of the prophet, Isa. ix. 1, 2. This town is described, by Josephus as standing in a

fruitful and pleasant country, near the lake or sea of Galilee: as the Jews called any large collection of waters a sea. We may suppose, that along the sides of this sea our Saviour loved to walk. After days of toil, he might retire in the evening to this spot; and as the waves rolled along the shores, and the sun sunk calmly in the distant sky, here he prayed to his Father in secret, or here in private taught his disciples. "The appearance of this lake in the time of Christ, was very different to that which it now presents. Then its borders were thickly populated, and the eye rested in turn upon fortresses, and cities, and villages: Magdala, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were the most distinguished. Then its surface was enlivened with boats passing constantly across, and from town to town, while the fishers launched forth to cast their nets in the deep waters. Then the shores were every where richly planted, and numerous delightful gardens were spread around; while a multitude of people were seen passing to and fro. And then were heard the voices of men calling to each other, the joyous shouts of happy children, the sound of the song and harp, the noise of the mill-stones, and the lowing of the herds upon the sides of the hills." But now all around is desolate; in the language of a modern traveller, "Silence now reigns throughout the whole extent of this sea."

MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

LUKE v. 1—11.

SHORTLY after our Lord had taken up his abode in this part of the country, one day, when on the

shore, the people came down the sides of the mountains that inclose the lake, and thronged about his path. And why did they break on his retirement? It was that they might hear from his lips the words of truth. Christ was always ready to give up his own ease that he might promote the good of man, and therefore was willing to teach them. The people pressed around him to hear, when, the better to address them, he entered into one of the many fishing boats that were commonly lying on the shore, and sat down to preach. The owners of the ship were his own disciples, who were diligently engaged, some in mending and others in washing their nets. They had already been called as disciples, and probably had been with him in some of his journeys; though they had not at this time wholly given up their employment as fishermen. When they saw their Master about to speak to the people, they left their nets, and hastened towards him; and, that he might address the people with advantage, they thrust the ship a little way from the land.

We may imagine we see the Lord Jesus in the boat, a few feet from the shore; the deep blue sky is spread above, and around are high rocks or gently sloping hills; while on the opposite edge of the lake appear villages and towns. Here he may have been heard by thousands, as he spoke to them from his floating pulpit.

The sermon ended, Jesus, to confirm the truths he had taught, wrought a miracle, showing his sovereign power as Lord of the seas, and all the creatures they contain. Turning to Simon Peter, he said, "Launch out into the deep, and

let down your nets for a draught." Simon answered: "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." They had many times during the night cast their nets into the deep waters, and found, to their disappointment, that no fish were inclosed. Yet they would not disobey; weary as they were, they made another trial, though it appeared to promise little success; for to fish in the open day, when the heat of the sun is on the waters, and the fish are usually in the recesses of the deep, is not the eastern mode.* They, in faith and obedience, push the boat into deep water, and let down the net for a draught. And now was brought together so large a number of fishes, that the net broke from the weight, or would have broken without assistance. In their perplexity, Simon and Andrew made a signal for their partners, James and John, to come to their help in another boat; when they loaded both vessels, so that they were in danger of sinking. Their previous want of success made this supply the more surprising; and the miracle being wrought in the day time, while the people still lingered on the shore, would serve to enforce the truths to which they had just listened. This miracle must have impressed their minds greatly, when they perceived that

* "In general, the fishermen of the east prefer the night, to any other time, for fishing. Before the sun has gone down, they push off their canoes, each carrying a lighted torch; and in the course of a few hours may be seen out at sea, or on the rivers, like an illuminated city. They swing the lights about over the sides of the boat, which the fish no sooner see than they come to the place, and then the men cast in the hook, the spear, or the net. They have many amusing sayings about the folly of the fish in being thus attracted by the glare of a torch." — *Roberts's Oriental Customs.*

creatures living in the depths of the sea were subject to Christ's authority.

Peter was astonished, and falling down at the Saviour's feet, cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He felt he was in the presence of Deity; a sense of his sins and unworthiness suddenly rushed on his mind, while, with mingled feelings of humility, gratitude, and awe, he entreated Jesus to depart from one who was so guilty and undeserving. He thought the Divine purity of Jesus could not endure him, and perhaps feared that the power which had brought the miraculous supply would break forth and consume him. It was the belief of the Jews, that whoever had seen any appearance of Deity, or messenger from the invisible world, would shortly die. Jacob was surprised, when he had seen the glory of God, that his life was preserved, Gen. xxxii. 30. Gideon expected to be slain when he was visited by the angel of the Lord, Judges vi. 22, 23. Manoah said to his wife "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." Judges xiii. 22. This belief arose from what God had said to Moses: "There shall no man see me, and live," Exod. xxxiii. 20. We may, therefore, suppose that Peter was in terror, lest this appearance was a warning of his speedy death.

But Simon did not know the love of Christ towards him, nor the gracious design of this miracle. His fears were soon calmed. "Fear not," said Jesus to his trembling disciple; "from henceforth thou shalt catch men." From that time Peter and his companions were to be entirely employed in preaching the gospel; and

in the surprising draught of fishes, they might foresee their future success. They were to be "fishers of men:" the world was the wide ocean in which they were to labour; the net was the gospel; they were to draw men from their native element of sin, and gather them safely to the shores of heaven. The fishing boats were then brought to the shore; and valuable to them as they were, they left their father Zebedee, and all they had in the world. They were secretly drawn by Divine grace, or they would not have so done. The more men have of the world, the less are they willing to give it up for Christ; but the disciples knew that he would provide for their wants, and in faith "they forsook all, and followed him."

1. Three years after this time, on the day of Pentecost, the Saviour's words, "Thou shalt catch men," were fulfilled. Then three thousand souls were converted by the preaching of the apostle Peter; and shortly after the number was increased by five thousand men, Acts ii. 41; iv. 4. It was the same almighty power that controlled multitudes of fishes, and inclosed them in the net, that brought so many guilty sinners into the net of the gospel, at the preaching of humble and uneducated fishermen. If we are required to give up worldly advantage for the sake of Christ, we should cheerfully submit. We may not be called to this test, like Peter; yet we are bound, if we love the Saviour, to forsake the follies and sins of the world; to give up our own ways, and to seek to promote the glory of our Lord.

2. This miracle encourages us to labour in the

duties of our calling. We must labour in the fear of God, hope for his blessing, and then gratefully receive whatever he chooses to grant. It also encourages the efforts of his people in seeking the salvation of the world. Though there is first a night of toil, and but little success, nevertheless at his word they again let down their gospel net, depending on the Divine promise for a favourable result.

3. Let not the net be cast in vain as to ourselves. How many times have we heard the gospel preached! Have we received it, and are we yielding to Jesus a willing obedience? or, are we saying to him, "Depart!" If, like Peter, we feel we are sinful, let us intreat our Lord *not* to depart; for if he leave us, we are undone for ever.

DEMONIAC RESTORED AT CAPERNAUM.

MARK i. 21—28; LUKE iv. 31—37.

SHORTLY after the healing of the nobleman's son, Jesus went down to his own city, Nazareth, the place where he was brought up, and where he had lived for many years, in obscurity and poverty. About this time was wrought the first of those wonderful miracles in which Christ showed his power over Satan and all evil spirits.

As other accounts of demoniacs are met with in the Gospels, it may be well to make a few remarks on the subject in this place.

The Scriptures teach, that there are angels who kept not their first estate, and who by sinning against God have made themselves devils. Their nature, once holy, is now depraved; their state,

once happy, is now miserable. After they had fallen, God made man, and set his love upon him: this provoked their envy, that an inferior creature should have that place in God's love which they had lost; and Satan, the chief of these spirits, tempted man to sin, that he might be made as wicked as himself, and lose the favour of his Creator. His temptation succeeded, and man also became a fallen creature. But God would not let Satan triumph: he promised a Saviour, who should destroy the works of the devil, and bring back man to the Divine favour. This increased the malice of the devils. They might have thought that they would have been the first objects of the Divine mercy; but they see themselves passed over, while God's own Son is given as a Saviour to those beneath them in creation. And now they envy mankind the mercy which is offered; they exert all their power and craft to prevent us reaching that heaven which they have for ever lost: in their rage they strive to drag us down into the same hopeless condemnation with themselves. The Scriptures tell us of their great number, record some of their names, and warn us of their craft, activity, and power; and they are the more dangerous, because they are invisible, and because there are evil desires within us, which incline us to listen to their temptations.

When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, they appear to have had more direct influence over men's bodies and souls than they now are permitted to manifest. God suffered it to be so, that the power and love of Christ, in delivering man from these enemies, might be shown.

In the Gospels mention is made of demoniacs

or persons actually under the influence of demons, or wicked spirits, who dwelt in the human body, governing, controlling, and making it the instrument of violence and sin. That Satan would be permitted thus to injure man, is shown in other parts of Scripture: see Gen. iii. 1—5; Job i.; Zech. iii. 1; Luke xxii. 31; Eph. vi. 12. It is not, therefore, a mere figure of speech, as some have supposed, but a reality, that Satan possessed or dwelt in the bodies of men.

A poor afflicted man, tormented by an unclean, or impure spirit, came to Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum. As the eyes of our Saviour rested on the unhappy object, the devil used the tongue of the man, and cried out with terror: "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Though there was one demon in the man, others joined in tormenting the afflicted object; therefore he cried, "Let us alone." The knowledge of their own impurity made them tremble before "the Holy One:" they knew his Divine power, and that if it were put forth, it would be for their punishment; it would be in vain for them to resist that power, which at last will shut them up in hell.

The cries of the evil spirit did not prevent the compassionate Redeemer setting the man free from his bondage. He first silenced the spirit; "Hold thy peace:" and then commanded, "Come out of him." Like a strong man armed, Satan keeps possession of a sinner, until a stronger than he appears, and casts him out, Luke xi. 21, 22. When he found he could no longer hold his

captive, he was filled with rage, and in parting showed his fierce and malignant nature: the man was thrown down convulsed, in the midst of the assembly, and with a loud cry the spirit came out of him, and did him no further harm. The spectators were amazed that by a word Satan should be cast out from his prey, and they inquired among themselves, "What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him!"

Like to the state of this demoniac is that of every sinner. It is true he is not possessed exactly like the man at Capernaum; yet he is still "led captive by the devil at his will;" his heart is under the rule of the unclean spirit; and the members of his body are made the instruments of sin, and often of violence. Satan causes unholy thoughts, stirs up sinful passions, and prompts to all kinds of wickedness. "He that committeth sin is of the devil," 1 John iii. 8. Those who do his work, have him for their master: they are the children, he is their father, John viii. 44; and the same miserable end awaits them.

PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER CURED.

MATT. viii. 14, 15; MARK i. 29—31; LUKE iv. 38, 39.

AMIDST the bright glories of heaven, the Saviour dwelt from all eternity; yet when he came to this earth, he had no home to call his own:—

Earth yielded him no resting spot;
Her Maker, though she knew him not.

He often took up his abode in the lowly dwellings of the poor, and depended on the kindness of his followers for his daily supplies of food.

When Jesus came from the synagogue after he had healed the demoniac, he went to a house where Simon and Andrew lived together. These brothers were natives of Bethsaida, but they now resided at Capernaum; and their house, we may suppose, was often honoured by the Saviour's presence, during his visits to this city. Simon Peter was a married man, and though he had been called to be an apostle, he still lived with his wife; which is a reproof to the Romanists, who say that all priests, as they call them, should be unmarried.

As soon as Jesus entered, Simon told him that the mother of his wife was suffering from a violent fever. He had just seen a miracle wrought for a stranger; surely, thought he, my request will not be denied. Whether she lived with him, or whether he received her into his house that she might be affectionately attended to during her sickness, is not known; but either shows the kindness of his heart. The Saviour did not need further entreaty, but entered the room where the aged woman lay. He stood over her, took her by the hand, and then by a word commanded the fever to depart. At once it was removed, and she arose from the bed perfectly restored. After a fever, there is commonly much feebleness for a time; yet now, to show that her recovery was at once completed, she arose and ministered to her Deliverer: probably waited on him at table. Oh! with what delight and gratitude must she have attended on Him who had raised her from the borders of the grave!

This miracle, with that of the draught of fishes, must have secured the confidence and affection of the disciples. They had just entered on a new and dangerous service, but they were now taught

that they were called to follow a Master who had power over the creatures of the deep, and over the most raging diseases.

1. In the conduct of Peter, we are taught to "show piety at home:" this is often delightfully seen in caring for an aged or afflicted mother. Let it not be forgotten that it is the Scripture that says, "Despise not thy mother when she is old," Prov. xxiii. 22.

2. A lesson of gratitude to God is also taught from the conduct of Peter's wife's mother. If it be wicked to forget the kindness of an earthly parent, it is much more so to be ungrateful for the blessings which come from our Father in heaven. And yet how few render to the Lord according to the benefits they have received! Many promise, if restored to health, that they will spend the rest of their lives in the ways of piety: they soon, however, forget the goodness of God toward them.

MANY HEALED ON THE SABBATH EVENING.

MATT. viii. 16, 17; iv. 23—25; MARK i. 32-34; LUKE iv. 40—42.

WHEN the sun was setting on the sabbath day, and the cool breeze of evening was favourable to the carrying of the afflicted, there were brought to Jesus, on their beds and couches, all in the neighbourhood that were sick, and others that were tormented by devils. As the Jewish sabbath ended at the setting of the sun, the people felt no scruple in carrying the afflicted, and laying them at the feet of Jesus, after that hour. If we had seen the sight, we might have turned away from the sickly objects as they lay on the ground: but not so the gracious Redeemer; he turned an eye of

mercy on them, and though they may have been very many, and their cases very desperate, as the Lord of life and health he healed them all. The news soon spread; and what a sight to behold in the twilight of a sabbath evening! Here, perhaps, was a party carrying a bed-ridden neighbour to be healed; and there a fond mother hurrying along with a sick infant in her arms; now came the aged blind, led by a little grandchild's hand; while others of the afflicted, who had no friendly aid, slowly made their way to share the Saviour's mercy. On one spot, we may imagine, stood a cluster of spectators praising the mighty deeds; and on another were the recovered, casting themselves at their Deliverer's feet, overcome with gratitude and joy. Oh! what rejoicing was heard that night through all the place! In one house, it may be, was a father restored to his delighted family; in another, a sick daughter raised up, to the great joy of her parents; and in a third dwelling, the son of a poor widow, sitting by her side, while the tears flowed down her cheeks at seeing her dear boy well again. Each one had to tell of an unheard of cure, and every mouth was full of the praises of Him who had done all things well. Never before did a sabbath close so happily on the city of Capernaum.

Night now set in, and slowly and reluctantly the people withdrew to their houses, leaving the Saviour alone with his disciples. Late as it was before he retired to rest, yet he arose the next morning "a great while before day!" The repose of Christ must have been brief indeed. He broke in upon the hours of rest for prayer. "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he

went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed;" and thus taught, that though we may be busy in doing good, we must not neglect private devotion. We cannot imitate our Lord in the wonderful works he did, yet we may in his practice of early rising for secret prayer. It was not for himself he prayed; he had no sins of his own to confess: he pleaded for those who should believe on his name.

After Jesus had left the cold mountain, where he had spent some hours in communion with his Father, he did not return to Capernaum; but went about all Galilee, "teaching the people, and healing all diseases, and those that were sick." Another cluster of miracles, which are recorded with the simplest brevity, doubtless made glad the hearts of many, and showed forth the Saviour's grace and power.



BANKS OF THE JORDAN.



TIBERIAS.

CHAPTER IV

The leprosy—A leper cleansed—The leprosy of the soul—How removed—Many healed at Capernaum—Paralytic healed—Roofs of eastern houses—Christ opposed in his works of mercy—Eastern beds—Jesus is Divine.

A LEPER CLEANSED.

MATT. viii. 2—4; MARK i. 40—45; LUKE v. 12—15.

AFTER the miracles at Capernaum, Jesus "went throughout Galilee," teaching the people, and healing those that were sick. Galilee was a country about sixty miles long, and thirty broad; and, according to Josephus, contained two hundred and fifty cities, with a large population: it may, therefore, be understood, that it was into

many, or the principal of these cities, that Christ went at this time. The chief city was Tiberias, where Herod, the "tetrarch of Galilee," probably resided, Luke iii. 1. It has been thought that this city was not visited by our Lord, as Herod, who beheaded John the Baptist, also sought his life, Matt. xiv. 3—11; Luke xiii. 31.

Our Lord, upon one occasion, came down from the mountain, where he had been preaching, followed by a train of people. As they drew nigh to one of the cities, a poor leper humbly implored his aid; and, to enforce the truths he had just made known, he resolved to show before the multitude his power over this dreadful disease.

A leper! how little do we understand of the dreadful misery of such an unhappy creature! As this disease is now almost unknown in our country, in its severe form, it is passed over, in reading the Scriptures, as one of the common afflictions of life; though at one time it was common even in Europe; and hospitals, called leper-houses, (after the leper Lazarus,) were erected in most countries. At first, small red spots suddenly appeared on the face, which gradually increased in number and size, till the whole body became like one sore. These spots after a time, had a covering of small scales, of an ashy colour, which gave a deadly white appearance to the whole body: hence it was called leprosy, derived from a Greek word meaning "white." There were lepers "as white as snow," Exod. iv. 6; Numb. xii. 10; 2 Kings v. 27. The blood became corrupt; the hair fell off; the eyes were red and bloodshot; the joints were weakened; the flesh fell away: and so little strength was

left, that the diseased person mostly became unfit for the duties of life. The hands and feet were, in some cases, drawn up and distorted, and the unhappy individual became a misery to himself, and a loathsome object in the sight of others. Wretched as must have been such a state to any man, it was more oppressive to a Jew, since by the laws he was regarded as impure and an outcast, and suffering under the immediate hand of God : the leprosy being looked on more as a judgment from God than an ordinary disease. To warn people not to touch the leper, the law compelled him to wear a peculiar dress ; his mouth was muffled by a cloth ; and, when any one approached, he was required to utter the mournful cry, "Unclean ! unclean !" Time brought no relief ; scarcely a hope of deliverance was cherished : the present was all misery ; the future was all cheerless. In this state, some dragged out a life of disease for more than fifty years. Many, who had been driven from the comforts of home, and the society of their friends, lived by themselves in tombs, caves, or huts ; they died unlamented, and their bodies were buried apart from others. Any poor object who entered a walled city was flogged, and driven back like a wild beast of the woods.*

* " One evening, as I was strolling along the sea-shore, I saw such an extraordinary object before me, that I could not take my eyes off it. A man was coming towards me, whose only clothing was a piece of cloth wrapped round the body from the waist downwards. His skin was perfectly white, and it seemed glazed, as if seared with a hot iron. His head was uncovered ; and his hair, which was of precisely the same colour as the skin, hung down in long strips upon his lean and withered shoulders. His eyes, except the eye-balls, were of a dull, murky red, and

Neglected and almost scorned as he was by his fellow men, there was love in the heart of Christ even for a leper. The case of him who came to Jesus at this time was desperate: he was "full of leprosy." He had, however, heard of the Physician who wrought so many wonderful cures, and he thought that there was hope even for one so wretched and forlorn. He resolved to prove the power of Christ; and, at some risk, he made his way towards him as he came from the mount. In his earnestness to be healed, he drew near to Christ, and knelt before him; then, with lowlier respect, he fell on his face, and worshipped him as a Divine Being: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" Did Jesus refuse this honour, and rebuke the man as guilty of profanity? Angels declined the offer of religious homage, Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 8, 9: pious men shrunk from receiving that which is only due to God, Acts iii. 12; xiv. 14, 15; but Jesus did not reject Divine honours when on earth; for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

he kept them fixed on the ground, as if it were painful for him to look up, which I found to be the case. He walked slowly and feebly; and he was so frightfully thin, that he seemed to stand before me a living skeleton. He did not at first venture to come within several yards of me. I moved towards him; but he walked further from me, beseeching me to give the smallest trifle to a miserable man, to save him from starving to death, as he was an object of universal scorn, and an outcast from his home and friends. He told me not to come near a polluted creature, for whom no one felt pity. He said he had, during many years, suffered dreadfully from the leprosy, and though he was now cured, it had left upon him these marks of pollution, which would prevent his ever being allowed to go near his fellow creatures again. The colour of his skin was changed to a corpse-like white, and none could mistake that he had been a leper."—*Caunter's Journey*.

‘ They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us,’ Matt. i. 23.

His prayer was humble and plain, and full of confidence. He submitted himself to the compassion of Christ. He expressed no doubt of his power to help him, and he humbly hoped he was willing: “ If thou *wilt*, thou *canst*.” Perhaps, a sense of his sin made him fear whether Jesus would heal one so unworthy. “ Make me clean:” the disease being ceremonially defiling, to be healed was to be made clean. Our Lord was pleased with his faith, and soon convinced him that he was as willing as he was able to relieve him.

Though no one was allowed to touch a leper, to show that he could not be defiled, Jesus touched him; and then with gracious words addressed the prostrate man: “ I will, be thou clean:” showing that it was by his own power he made him whole. It was not by a lingering process that health returned, for “ immediately the leprosy left him.” That body so loathsome, and in which disease was so deeply rooted, in a moment was free from the afflicting plague: his flesh came to him again, “ like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” And now, lest in the fulness of his joy he should delay to keep the law, he was directed, “ See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.” It has been asked, Why was he enjoined to tell no man? It may be, that it should not be said that Jesus sought earthly honour from his miracles; or that the people might not be excited to arise and claim him as their king; or that the ill-will of the

scribes and pharisees might not be needlessly provoked; or, principally, that the priests should not, from malice, deny the cure that had been wrought. The priest was the judge of the law, and to him the case was referred, that he might pronounce the reality and completeness of the cure.

“Go thy way,” to Jerusalem—forty to fifty miles from the scene of the miracle—and let the priest see “if the plague be healed in the leper.” Then, when thou art pronounced clean, offer there thy “two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:” see Lev. xiv. 2—32. The man obeyed, and overcome with joy and gratitude, as he travelled along the road, forgetful of the charge that had been given him, he spread abroad the fame of the Saviour’s grace and power.

1. Few in this land are attacked by this dreadful scourge; yet there is a more deadly disease, which is not confined to age or country, and which rages now as fatally as in ancient times. It is sin, the leprosy of the soul! The Scripture declares of the sinner, “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores,” Isa. i. 6. This spiritual disease appears in childhood, and increases with our years; it pollutes every power of the body and faculty of the mind. Like the leprosy, it is loathsome; it is the abominable thing that God hates, Jer. xlv. 4. It is inherited from our parents: we are born in sin, and shapened in iniquity, Psa. li. 5. It excludes from communion with God, and from heaven: and, at length, it will bring the body down to the grave; “for the wages of sin is death,” Rom. vi. 23; and if sin is unpardoned, it will ruin the soul for ever.

2. Let the conduct of the leper instruct us how we should seek deliverance from this awful state. He went to Christ, sensible of his misery, and humbly cast himself on his mercy. He knew he had no claim, other than his misery gave him; he pleaded the ability of Christ to heal him, and besought his compassion. Thus must we seek to the Saviour of sinners, under a sense of our guilt, and with faith in his power and mercy.

3. In the success which attended the application of the leper to Christ, we see the acceptance which the penitent sinner shall receive. If the leper, who had no special promise given to him, was not sent away uncured, it is certain that sinners, who have "exceeding great and precious promises" to encourage their faith, shall not be rejected.

O Jesus! bountiful as strong to save,
 For mercy as for mightiness adored:
 O give me grace thy healing power to crave,
 "If thou be willing, thou canst cleanse me, Lord."
 Thy pity ne'er a ruthless answer gave,
 In lowly fervency of heart implored.
 Ne'er wilt thou spurn the sinner's contrite sou.,
 Ne'er see unmoved the tears of anguish roll,
 But gracious still reply: "I will it, be thou whole!"

MANY HEALED IN GALILEE.

MARK i. 45; LUKE v. 15.

THE cure of the leper brought many to see and hear Christ. In the streets of the large cities, they thronged about his path; they flocked from the villages into the highways along which he was expected to pass; they broke in upon his retirement in the mountains; nor could they be restrained from entering the houses where he had sought for rest. That he might find quiet and repose he

withdrew for a short time into a desert, or uncultivated place. He was not tired of relieving human suffering, nor of teaching human ignorance; but his body was subject to the common and sinless infirmities of our nature; he, therefore, sought for rest away from the busy crowd. Besides, he saw at this time that the people, in their excited state, might be carried away to rebel against their rulers, and proclaim him as their king. As this would interfere with the great purpose for which he came to the earth, while it would expose the Jews to the wrath of the Romans, he withdrew for a short season.

When our Lord returned from the desert, he privately entered into Capernaum: it soon, however, became known that he was there, and the people again flocked to him with their diseases, from different parts of the land; nor did they seek to him in vain, for "he healed them all." What mercy was here! ALL, whatever the nature of the malady, and however poor and friendless the applicant. Such displays of power and benevolence increased the crowding of the people; for what will not men do to get free from disease! what will they not spend! yea, "all that a man hath will he give for his life," Job ii. 4: but to obtain a certain cure of afflictions deemed incurable, free of all cost, who would not make an effort, when the blessing is within his reach?

Numbers continued to throng the door, in vain seeking admittance, for the house was filled. Jesus beheld the eager, struggling multitude, and felt more than human pity. It was a pity not merely for their sickly bodies; he knew that all were sinners—ignorant and ruined, needing a Physician

for the soul. He then began to teach them, as they stood and sat around. Among those who had assembled were some Jewish doctors, who had come, not with a desire to profit by the "Teacher sent from God," but to discover something in his conduct or speech, by which they might lessen his credit with the people, or else find grounds to accuse him of breaking the law. It was not long before their pride and prejudice were aroused.

A PARALYTIC HEALED.

MATT. ix. 2—8; MARK ii. 1—12; LUKE v. 17—26.

SLOWLY along the road four men were seen bearing on his bed a man sick of the palsy, or, as he would now be called, a helpless paralytic. This disease was not uncommon in the east, and was often caused by the practice of sleeping at night in the open air.*

The bearers carefully carried their afflicted friend: the hope of his getting relief made them cheerfully bear along their burden. And now they arrive before the house: already they seem as if they had succeeded on their errand of mercy:—when how great their distress to find that they cannot get near to present the sick to Jesus! They in vain implore that an opening may be made in the crowd, and urge the misery of their friend. The door-way is thronged: some are seeking a cure themselves; others are anxious to

* Bishop Pearce, in the "Miracles of Jesus Vindicated," considers that the man's disorder was what is called the *universal palsy*, which is quickly fatal; and which may account for the earnestness and haste of the bearers in getting their friend to Christ. A few hours would probably have closed the sick man's life. Ader, in his "Treatise on Scripture Diseases," is of the same opinion.

hear the Saviour preach; many are influenced by curiosity to see him; and the envious scribes are not disposed to give way that he may again prove his almighty power. We may suppose we see the bearers of the poor paralytic: they have been again and again foiled, and they now rest their burden on the ground, and for a few moments consult what is to be done. They conclude that the stay of Jesus in the city will be short, and another opportunity may not occur. Shall they again attempt an entrance? and yet it seems almost useless. Shall they return home as they came out? how mortifying to themselves! what a disappointment to their sick friend! The sight of his helpless state touches their hearts, and makes them resolve to try once more to gain an entrance. When the thought occurs, to ascend the top of the house, and let him down from above into the midst of the assembly. They again take up their burden, and make their way up the stairs by the side of the house, and so ascend the parapet; or, they make their way along the terraces of the adjoining houses. What pains they take to get their burden to the top! At length, they reach the flat roof; and now what is to be done? If the house were like some in the east, it was of one or two stories high, of the form of a small square, with an open court in the middle. Over this centre, cords were placed from side to side, which folded and unfolded a kind of awning. In bright sunny weather, this covering was drawn aside; and at night, or in the wet season, it was fastened across. So that the bearers had only to unfasten the veil or awning, and they could look down into the assembly where Jesus was teaching.

Or if, as in some houses in Judea, the roof had a large trap-door, this could as easily be opened.* Then, again taking up the helpless man on his bed, they gently lower him down. How strong a proof is this of their affliction for their friend, and of their faith in the Saviour! If they so exerted themselves to get health restored to the sick body of their neighbour, let it teach us to spare neither pains nor labour that we may lead those we love to Jesus, to obtain salvation for their souls.

Jesus was not angry because they had interrupted him in his discourse; he did not rebuke the bearers, and order the sick man to be removed from his sight. He saw their care and anxiety, and knew the hope and fear which filled the poor man's heart. Never did the Saviour turn coldly away from one who sought his help. The man now lay stretched on his mattress; he spoke not a word; his helpless body and imploring look were enough: those clenched hands, and that tearful eye, spoke to the heart of Christ. The first word He spoke sounded kindly: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Was it so, that the man had not only faith in Christ's power to work a miracle, but, as a sinner, also believed in him as able to pardon his sin? or, did he fear lest his past sins would deprive him of the blessing? Whatever were the thoughts of his heart, they were known to Christ, who

* The evangelist Mark says, "They uncovered the roof;" and Luke, that "they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling." Dr. Shaw supposes that the house had an opening with a veil across the inner court; but Dr. Bloomfield, Paxton, and others, consider that there are objections to this explanation, and that the original word means "to dig" "to break up," or "to pluck out."

intended to make the man truly happy, and therefore he first spoke of forgiveness. The cure of his body alone would not have made him happy. If our Lord had cured his disease, insured to him health for the remainder of his days, prolonged his life for a hundred years, made him rich, raised him to the highest honours of the earth, placed him in a palace, made him monarch of a mighty empire—all this would not have made him happy. He freely received the pardon of his sins, and the salvation of his soul. These are better than all earthly blessings, and in these true happiness consists.

Now mark the scribes: their cheeks reddened with rage, and they dart their scornful looks, as they hear Christ pronounce the words of mercy. *He forgive sin indeed!* Where is the proof? This man is a blasphemer; he speaks wickedly: for who can forgive sins but God? We have at last clear evidence against him, and now it is in our power to crush his growing popularity.—They did not speak their thoughts: they may have feared the people. Jesus, however, knew what was passing in their minds, and soon gave them a sign that he had power to pronounce pardon to the impenitent. “Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk.” As though our Lord had said—“Look at that poor man: see how utterly helpless he is: is he not beyond the reach of human skill? where is the physician in Israel that can make him well? Now, if I can restore him to health in a moment—at a word—will it not be a proof that I have power to forgive sin? for if I can do the one, does it not

show that I can do the other? Will not the power I exert so wonderfully on the body, assure you that I can exercise the same on the soul? Each is alike easy to me. Or do you think that God would give such power to a blasphemer?" Then, to show that it was not a vain boast, he said to the man, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."* A secret energy went with the word; the joints and muscles received strength, and in a moment the man sprung from his bed, and stood erect before the astonished crowd. The next moment, he rolled up his bed, took it on his shoulder, and, pressing through the crowd, hastened to his home, praising God as he journeyed along. What new feelings now possessed

* The beds of the poor among the Jews were much more simple, and more easy to carry, than modern beds. They consisted of mats, or a long roll like stair-carpeting; which could be soon folded up, and conveniently carried away. In the case of the paralytic, the carrying even of a small eastern bed was a clear proof of his cure. Others were formed of two quilts, one of which was folded double, and served for a mattress; the second was for a coverlet; with a roll of cloth for a pillow. Some had frames, like a cot.

"On the morning after my arrival at Bombay, I got up with the first blush of the dawn, and hastily drawing on my clothes, proceeded alone in search of adventures. I had not gone far, before I saw a native sleeping on a mat spread in the little verandah extending along the front of his house. He was wrapped up in a long robe of white linen, or white cotton cloth. As soon as the first rays of the sun peeped into his rude sleeping chamber, 'he arose, took up his bed, and went into his house.' I saw immediately an explanation of this expression, which, with slight variations, occurs in the Bible, in connexion with several of the most striking and impressive of Christ's miracles, particularly with that of the man sick of the palsy. The Hindoo got on his feet, cast the long folds of his wrapper over his shoulder, stooped down, and having rolled up his mat, which was all the bed he required, he walked into the house with it, and then proceeded to the nearest tank to perform his morning ablutions."—*Captain Basil Hall's Fragments of Voyages and Travels*, vol. iii.

his heart, as he entered the doors of his house! From those doors he had been carried out borne by four friends; he now returns on his own feet, bearing that on which, a few hours before, he was stretched in helplessness; he went out trembling in every joint, he is now active and strong; he then had hope, he now has joy; he went out with sin unpardoned, he now returns with a blessing both for body and soul.

The scribes and pharisees were silenced and confounded; they could not account for what they had seen. It was clear there was no delusion: there lay the man a minute before, in all his misery; they saw his wretched state, and now they behold him already on his way to his home in perfect health. It was useless to attempt to account for it as the result of natural causes; no means had been employed; only a sentence had been spoken: how then could they justify their unbelief? And yet, it is to be feared, they only hardened their hearts against the evident conclusion that Jesus was the Son of God.

While these wise men of their times were unwilling to be convinced, "the multitude glorified God, who had given such power unto men;" and as they walked to their homes they said one to another, "We have seen strange things to-day!" "We never saw it on this fashion!" The Jews believed that every disease was a punishment for some sin, and that as soon as that sin was forgiven, the disease would be taken away: they, therefore, praised God for the token he had given of his mercy; yet they knew not that He who wrought it, though now in humble dress and human form, had done it by his own almighty power.

The three miracles which have followed in order, supply convincing proofs that Jesus is Divine. The cure of the nobleman's son at a distance, proves his *omnipresence*—that he is in all places; the wonderful draught of fishes displays his *omniscience*—that he has all knowledge; and the healing of the paralytic shows that he is *omnipotent*—that he can do all things. These are the attributes of Deity: no human being, our angel, ever possessed one of these properties, who then must He be, who proved he had them all? Indeed this latter miracle supplies in itself three evidences of the Divinity of Christ. He instantly cured the man of the disease by his own power. He knew the thoughts of the scribes: no one can search the thoughts of the heart but God, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; Jer. xvii. 10; Rom. viii. 27; Rev. ii. 23. He forgave the man his sin; and, to show that he had the right so to do, he removed its punishment. Forgiveness of sin belongs only to God, Isa. xliii. 25; xlv. 22.

In this view of Christ, every miracle possesses an increased interest: for while his Divine nature assures us he has power to pardon the guilty, and heal those diseased of sin, these works of mercy convince us he is willing. Then let us apply to him in faith; let no difficulties prevent us from seeking a cure; but submitting ourselves to his compassion, let us humbly lie at his feet, until he bids us arise, and go joyfully on our way to heaven. Thus will it appear to all around that we have risen from a state of sin; and our lives of obedience, gratitude, and love, will lead them to glorify God.



MODERN JERUSALEM, FROM THE EAST.

CHAPTER V.

Christ at Jerusalem—The pool of Bethesda—An infirm man cured—The Saviour's charge—His ability to save—Man with a withered hand restored—It is lawful to do good on the sabbath—Christ the Lord of the sabbath—The Christian sabbath.

THE district of Galilee was favoured above all others with the presence of the Saviour, during his residence among men. Hitherto, all the principal miracles had been wrought in that province; but now Jesus left it, passing through the chief cities, on his way to Jerusalem to keep the passover.

INFIRM MAN AT POOL OF BETHESDA.

JOHN v. 1—47.

ARRIVED at "the great city," our Saviour went up to the temple. On his way he passed a small collection of waters, inclosed by a building, which had obtained the name of Bethesda, or the "house of mercy:" for here God had shown his mercy, by healing the sick and diseased in a miraculous manner. This pool was not far from the entrance of the city, near the sheep market, or gate, (built by Eliashib, the high priest, in the days of Nehemiah, Neh. iii. 1,) through which the animals, intended for sacrifice, were driven on their way to the temple. Around the waters, porches, or covered ways, were built, in which persons could find shelter from the heat of an eastern sun, and the heavy rains which sometimes fell. These apartments were of great service to the sick, who resorted in considerable numbers to the pool; for God was pleased, at certain seasons, to send an angel to trouble, or disturb, the waters of the pool, by which a healing power was given to them; and the first person that stepped in after the moving of the waters, was instantly healed, whatever was the disease, and however long it had been endured. The sick were often attended by their friends, who watched with them, and assisted them in their efforts to reach the waters at the favourable moment.

How often this occurred is unknown: some have thought it was every sabbath; but it would appear it was at uncertain intervals, which made it necessary for the people constantly to watch. Nor is it known when the waters first acquired their healing power. The Old Testament does not

allude to them. In these miraculous waters was a sign that God had not entirely forsaken his chosen people; and, besides, they were an emblem of that fountain which was about to be "opened for sin and for uncleanness."

No doubt, this pool had been a house of mercy to many, who had here found a cure without money and without price. And happy was he who, after long watching and frequent efforts, at length felt himself surrounded by the troubled water, whose healing virtue passed quickly through his system, and gave strength and soundness to his withered frame.

It was the sabbath day when Jesus passed this scene of human suffering. His eye glanced at the anxious patients waiting for the favoured season, when one amongst them might again rejoice in the fulness of health. What a gathering of afflicted creatures did he now behold! "A great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water;" and but one to be healed at a time! What a variety of disease was here, which had baffled all human skill! and now, regarded as incurable by man, they had, as their last hope, sought to these waters for relief.

The entrance of a stranger into the porches would hardly be noticed, as the afflicted lay along the margin of the pool, with eyes intently watching for the first motion of the water.

Around Bethesda's healing wave,
Waiting to hear the rustling wing,
Which spoke the angel nigh, who gave
Its virtue to that holy spring,
With patience and with hope endued,
Were seen the gathered multitude.

Had they, who watched and waited there,
 Been conscious who was passing by,
 With what unceasing, anxious care
 Would they have sought his pitying eye,
 And craved, with fervency of soul,
 His power Divine, to make them whole !

In one of the porches lay a poor man, who had lost the use of his limbs. For eight and thirty years he had been thus afflicted; not that we are to suppose he had lain all that time by the side of the pool; and yet, perhaps, here from day to day, and from year to year, he had taken his place in the fond hope that he too might find a cure. He had seen others, who had lain by his side, depart to their homes with joy. Many whose cases had been as bad as his own, had been healed; and though frequent disappointment had almost led to despair, he still clung to the hope, that there might come a favoured hour when he also should realize the blessing.

Jesus beheld the afflicted group, and he selected this poor man to be the object on whom to work a miracle: he knew how long he had been in this state, and he now approached to deliver him. How strange was the question he proposed: "Wilt thou be made whole?" Why, this had been the long cherished wish of his heart; did he intend to mock him? Yet there was something so kind in the manner of the stranger, that he was encouraged to reply, "Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." He could but drag himself along; he had no one willing to assist him, nor had he money to pay for help; others, therefore, easily obtained the cure before him. And yet

the question may have aroused his hope. Who can tell but, after all, here may be a friend who will assist me to the waters the next time they are moved? He little thought he was telling his touching tale to Him who gave the pool its virtue, and who could as easily remove his affliction without its waters as with them. Deliverance was nearer than he conceived. Jesus looked on him with love and pity, and with a gracious voice said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

He who gave the command, gave the power to obey, and the man arose in an instant, and found himself made whole. The first thoughts and feelings which broke on his mind, as he found himself standing erect before his Deliverer, can be only faintly conceived by us. "Is it a reality? or is it only a pleasant dream? Are these my limbs, that a moment ago were shrunk and destitute of strength? After eight and thirty years of feebleness and pain, do I again feel health nerve my frame, and cheer my heart? Oh! this is wonderful beyond expression!"

It has been remarked, that our Lord, after performing a miracle, was accustomed to connect some circumstance with it, which attested its truth. After the miracle of the five loaves, he ordered the fragments to be collected, which were more in quantity than the loaves themselves, though several thousands had been fed. When he changed the water into wine, he ordered some to be taken first to the steward of the feast, that he might taste it, and bear testimony to its being truly wine. When he cured the leper, he commanded him to show himself to the priest, whose business it was to judge of the cure. So here, he deemed

it necessary, after having cured this infirm man, to order him not only to arise, but to take up his bed, and walk, in proof that he was restored.

It is also worthy of notice, that Christ, after he had restored an afflicted person, often gave a word of caution or advice: it was "a word in season." He did so in this case. The first use the man made of his restored strength was to hasten to the temple—there, most likely, to present a thank-offering for his unexpected recovery. In the temple he met his gracious Deliverer, and hastened towards him to repeat his expressions of gratitude, when this solemn charge was given to him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." It supposes that the affliction had been the punishment for the sins of his early days. So it has been with thousands: a prodigal and sinful course in youth has made miserable the rest of their days. They have been "made to possess the sins of their youth."

Advice from so great a Benefactor, given at such a time, when the heart was softened with a sense of undeserved mercy, would surely never be forgotten. It was as though Jesus had said to him, "Behold the compassion of God towards you; instead of being left to linger in misery to the day of your death, the Divine power has been put forth for your recovery. You are now perfectly free from disease; but remember, if you return again to sin, the anger of God will be so provoked against you, that your soul will be certainly lost for ever." Was it, then, possible that he could ever forget his wonderful restoration to health, that he needed this solemn admonition? Yes; there was a danger of his

return to the sins of his early days. Our Lord knew this : he knew what deceit and wickedness are in the human heart ; and that many have lived to forget their vows made on recovery, and have at last died in their sins. Let us learn that sin is the cause of all our pain, and of death : if we are mercifully raised from affliction, we should be watchful against sin in the time to come ; nor should we forget that worse judgments will fall on those who sin after mercy received.

The pool of Bethesda has long ceased to flow ; no angel is now sent from heaven to dispense a cure to the afflicted children of men ; the Saviour no more walks the earth in human form ; yet we may sing with the poet :—

Saviour, thy love is still the same
 As when that healing word was spoke ;
 Still in thine all-redceming name,
 Dwells power to burst the strongest yoke.
 Oh be that power, that love displayed ;
 Help those, whom thou alone canst aid.

The ability of Christ to heal is not like the pool of Bethesda, at uncertain, and, perhaps, at distant intervals ; but every hour, of every day, in every age it remains the same. Bethesda could only heal one at a time : how many were disappointed, for every one that was cured ! Jesus saves all who come unto him. The pool was for the diseases of the body ; it could not cleanse the spirit of a man : Jesus is the “ Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.” He cleanses the soul from all guilt and pollution.

Instead of discerning in this miracle the evidence that Christ was the Messiah, the Jews ‘persecuted him, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath

day." To give a person medicine, that he might recover, they thought was right; but to heal a man without medicine, only by speaking a word, they said was breaking the law! The blindness and perverseness of the heart were never more evident than in the conduct of the pharisees towards our Lord.

The enemies of Christ did not cease to watch his conduct. It would appear that some of the pharisees had been appointed by the sanhedrim, or council, to follow in his path, that they might find occasion to accuse him. Wherever he went, they were found by his side, with jealous eye observing every act, and noting every word. His healing on the sabbath had, in particular, excited their ill-will. The law enjoined the keeping of the seventh day; and the Jews, under pretence of strictly attending to the command, had added many superstitious rites, so that it was gradually changed from a day of spiritual rest, and of the worship of God, into a day of ceremonial trifling. But as our duty is not to be neglected, because wicked people may speak ill of us, so Christ did not allow their envy and malice to stay him in his work of love.

Jesus went on his way to Capernaum, and, on his arrival, entered into the synagogue, followed by his plotting enemies, when the subject of keeping the sabbath was again presented in a practical form.

MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND.

MATT. xii. 10—15; MARK iii. 1—12; LUKE vi. 6—12.

AMONG those who had come to worship, or to beg at the doors, was a poor man with a withered

hand. The muscles, sinews, and nerves, had shrunk and dried up, so that his hand had become quite useless, like a dead branch on a tree. This affliction would sometimes attack a person suddenly: if the hand was stretched out at the moment of the attack, it was impossible to draw it back to its place; or whatever was its position when struck, in that form it remained. It was attended with great danger, and often proved fatal. We have an instance of a withered hand in king Jeroboam, who put forth his hand against the prophet of the Lord, when it "dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him," 1 Kings xiii. 4.

Whether our Lord sought out the man, or whether the pharisees drew attention to him, is not stated. They, however, proposed the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?" not with any desire of knowing their duty, but "that they might accuse him." Christ knew their wicked motive, and met them by another question: "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep?" This was an appeal to their self-interest, as well as to their own practices; for, according to their interpretation of the law, a man might on the sabbath rescue a sheep that was in danger. As much more valuable, then, as the life of a man is than the life of a sheep, so much better a work is it to save the former than the latter. Besides, they had themselves a maxim, that whoever neglected to save human life, when it was in his power, was a murderer. The pharisees

remained silent at the question. Christ again appealed to them: "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" Yourselves shall be the judges. Ask your own consciences which is right: that I should save the life of this man, or that you should seek to take away my life?—Still they were silent. They could not say it was lawful to do evil, and their envy would not allow them to say it was lawful to do well. Jesus saw their confusion, and boldly declared, "It is lawful to do well on the sabbath days." To relieve human suffering is not only allowable, but to neglect it would be to break the law of charity; inasmuch as the moral law is superior to the ceremonial law.

He then fixed his eyes upon them. He saw they were only influenced in their inquiries by an envious spirit. He knew they would rather that the poor man should go without the cure, than that he who wrought the cure should have the praise of it. As he looked on them, he was angry, and grieved at the hardness of their hearts; but this was not the anger that seeks revenge; it was the righteous displeasure of his holy mind against sin, whilst he grieved for the state of the unhappy sinners. It was the same feeling that led him to weep over Jerusalem: he saw their fearful danger, and the misery that awaited them, if they continued to resist the truth.

Having refuted their cavils on the grounds of Scripture and reason, our Lord desired the man with a withered hand to stand forth. He then commanded him to stretch it out. Instead of pleading that he was unable to do it, and that the command was unreasonable, he made an

effort to obey, and in the effort the blessing came; his hand "was restored whole, like as the other."

The man now stood before the assembly as a proof that the Saviour's claim to be the Lord of the sabbath was true; while the cure being effected by a word, without even a touch, the sabbath was unbroken, even according to their own perverted interpretations of the law.

The pharisees were silenced, but not convinced: to be put to shame before the people only increased their enmity; "they were filled with madness." They felt they could not stand before his arguments, sustained as they were by such signs and wonders. Their credit was in danger; they saw that if Jesus was allowed to go on, their influence and gains would be lost. What then could be done? It was an affair of so much importance that they called a council. They also united with them a sect of the Jews, called Herodians, who were attached to the Romans, and to whom they were commonly opposed, but with whom they now became friends, that they might compass the death of one whom they hated and feared. After consulting together, they resolved to murder Christ! Oh! what folly to plot against Him who had already shown that he knew their most secret thoughts, and that even the power of devils could not stand before him! Oh! what wickedness to seek to kill Him whose whole life was spent in doing good to man!

Who does not admire the patience and forbearance of the Son of God! Instead of visiting his enemies with deserved judgments, he quietly withdrew into Galilee.

Is the sabbath, then, to be lightly regarded? Is it the design of our Saviour's teaching and example to lessen our reverence for this holy day? Certainly not. What he intended to assert was, that works of mercy are consistent with the holiness of the sabbath. He taught expressly that the sabbath was made for the advantage and happiness of man; and in his own conduct always observed it; nor did he at any time allow of any act which was likely to weaken a due regard to its claims. He opposed the false notions of the Jews in respect to the law—their “vain traditions,” by which they had made the commandment of God of no effect, Matt. xv. 6; but the law of God itself he neither broke nor slighted, but always respected and perfectly obeyed.

After the resurrection of Christ, the sacred day was changed. To us the day of the Lord should be a season of cheerful, active piety; for on it we commemorate the finishing of our redemption by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Let us, then, “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,” let us “enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name,” Psa. c. 4. While we avoid worldly pleasure, trifling, and business, as contrary to the right keeping of the Lord's day, let us not forget that “it is lawful to do well.” To attend on the sick; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; to teach the young and the ignorant; to distribute tracts, that sinners may be converted—these are works of mercy and necessity, and to do these is to do well.



MOUNT TABOR.

CHAPTER VI.

Many brought from distant parts to be healed—The centurion's servant healed—Subordination in the Roman army—Danger of unbelief—Woes pronounced on Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum—Nain—Eastern funerals—A widow's son raised from the dead—The young may die—The Saviour's call—Many miracles.

It was a saying of the Jewish rabbins, "God loves the sea of Galilee, beyond all other seas;" and, indeed, it was greatly honoured by Him who is "the true God, and eternal life." His hours of solitude and prayer were spent on its margin, or among the mountains which bounded its shores; its neighbourhood was the scene of

most of his miracles; and to it he at times withdrew, to escape from the designs of rash friends, or enraged enemies. The conduct of the pharisees had driven him from Judea, and he came again to the sea side. Galilee being under a different government, and separated from Judea by Samaria, he was more out of the reach of his persecutors.

MANY HEALED.

LUKE vi. 17—19.

THOUGH Christ had a short rest from his enemies, the afflicted still pressed about him for relief. "A great multitude of people" followed him from the country he had just left, while others showed their faith in his power to heal, by bringing their sick from Idumca, Tyre, Sidon, and other more distant parts. Idumea was about one hundred miles from where Jesus then was. To carry the afflicted so long a journey would occupy many days, and be attended with danger and great expense; yet the hope of relief prompted many to undertake it. Their faith was rewarded in all obtaining a cure; and on their return to their own countries, the fame of Christ was spread to a considerable distance around. May we be as anxious and as earnest in seeking to Jesus, to obtain mercy for our souls.

A CENTURION'S SERVANT HEALED.

MATT. viii. 5—13; LUKE vii. 1—10.

AFTER a short absence, our Lord again entered Capernaum, where the first act of his power was to heal the servant of a centurion.

Herod. at this time was king of Galilee, but

under subjection to the Romans. To support himself in his authority, and to enforce the payment of tribute, which he had to render to the emperor of Rome, large bodies of soldiers were stationed in various parts of the land.

The Roman officer who came to Christ was a centurion, or captain over a hundred men. He had heard, we may suppose, of the cure of the nobleman's son, in this town, and was encouraged by it to apply to Christ on behalf of his afflicted servant. Though he must have felt the difference there was between a Jewish nobleman, and a Roman officer, who was by birth a Gentile, yet he appears to have had strong faith, which overcame every thing that would have kept him back. He manifested also great humility, as well as great faith; for, not thinking himself worthy to go to Christ, he engaged the intercession of the elders, or chief persons among the Jews. They came to our Lord, and earnestly besought him to grant the request. They pleaded on his behalf: "He is worthy for whom thou shouldest do this; for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." It was an unusual circumstance for a Roman soldier to build a house for the worship of God: the Romans commonly showed great contempt for the religion of the Jews. Such, however, was the respect which this centurion had gained with the people among whom he was stationed, that the elders overcame their own prejudices, that they might ask a favour of Christ on his behalf. It is not unlikely that he was a worshipper of the true God—a proselyte of the gate, like Cornelius, another pious centurion, whose name is recorded

in the Scriptures, Acts x. 1. Though there were many corruptions among the Jews at this time, he had seen the superiority of their religion over the degrading and unholy rites of idolatry, and was now a convert to their faith. His connexion with the Jews had made him acquainted with the sacred writings, and he may have become so enlightened, as even to be among those who now looked for the coming of the Messiah.

“I will come and heal him,” was the reply of Jesus; who, unlike earthly physicians, could speak with certainty as to the result. He at once went along with the elders on the way to the centurion's house. The news that he was on the road was soon carried to the officer, who was greatly affected with this prompt and gracious act of our Lord. The nobleman's son was cured at a distance; Jesus did not go to his mansion; but for Him to come down in person to the centurion's house, was an act of unexpected kindness. So highly did he think of Christ, and so lowly of himself, that he felt himself unworthy to receive him under his roof.

Jesus still went forward, when the centurion, hearing of his approach, sent his friends to entreat him not to give himself so much trouble, for as he was not worthy to apply to Christ in person, so he was less worthy to receive him into his habitation. Our Lord still proceeded onward: for he ever loves to honour those who are lowly in their own esteem, who are sensible of their unworthiness.

Christ now drew nigh to the house, when the centurion hastened from the sick-bed of his servant, and with reverence addressed him: “Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word

only, and my servant shall be healed." Observe his lowly view of himself. "He is worthy," said the elders. "I am not worthy," cried the humble soldier. He makes no mention of his having built a synagogue, or that he had become a worshipper of the God of Israel; he says nothing of his kindness to his servant, nor claims any thing on account of his own rank; but, in deep self-abasement, he submits the case to the compassion of Christ.

By an allusion to his profession, he expressed his entire confidence in the perfect ability of Jesus to restore his servant: "I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." Now, if I, who am myself under authority, or but an inferior officer in the army, am promptly obeyed by the soldiers under me, though I only speak a word;* how much more is it in thy power to remove the affliction of my servant! for the most inveterate diseases are as obedient to thy word, as the most disciplined soldiers are to the

* The strictest subordination and obedience were exacted of every Roman soldier. The Roman infantry were divided into three principal classes, each of which was composed of thirty companies, and each company contained two hundred men. Over every company were placed two centurions, one to each hundred; who were, however, far from being equal in rank and honour, though possessing the same office. The humble centurion of the Gospel, appears to have been of the inferior order. He was a man "under authority" of other centurions.

"A captive chief, who was marching to the British head-quarters, on being asked concerning the motives that induced him to quit his native land, and enter into the service of the rajah of Nepal, replied in the following impressive manner: 'My master sent me. He says to his people, to one, Go you to Ghurwal. To another, Go you to Cashmire, or to any distant part. The slave obeys; it is done. None ever inquires into the reason of an order of the rajah.'" *Dr. Adam Clarke; Fraser's Notes of a Journey to the Himalaya Mountains.*

command of their officer; nor can distance be any obstacle to thee. Give then the word, and the disease shall depart.

Jesus looked on the centurion with delight, as he stood bending before him. He knew his kind concern for his servant, his zeal for the worship of God, his amiable disposition that had gained him the good-will of his neighbours, and his deep humility; but it was his faith that chiefly obtained the approval of our Lord: "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"—in the Jewish nation. While I am rejected by those who pride themselves in being called the children of believing Abraham, here is a Gentile by birth, who regards me as possessed of almighty power.

Our Lord made this an occasion of warning the Jews of the consequence of their unbelief. The Gentiles "shall come from the east and west," (from the whole heathen world, Isa. xlv. 6; lix. 19,) "and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here is a beautiful allusion to an eastern banquet, where the three great Jewish patriarchs might be supposed to meet with their pious descendants, and recline with them at the heavenly feast. To be in their society, was to the Jews the chief attraction of heaven. They all expected this privilege as their birthright, and would presumptuously say, that it was impossible that a Jew should be missing at the heavenly banquet. But they were now solemnly forewarned, that numbers would be shut out through their

unbelief, whilst the heathen, through faith in the Messiah, would find admittance. As eastern feasts were held at night, in tents brilliantly illuminated with hundreds of coloured lamps, the "outer darkness" formed a most gloomy contrast. The figure, however, has been supposed to refer to those who were not only shut out from the banquet, but were also cast into the darkness of a dungeon. Not only to lose the long-expected feast, but to be shut up in a prison for life, might well cause weeping and gnashing of teeth—the extreme of anguish and despair. How fearful to delude ourselves with a hope of heaven, and then to be cast into "blackness of darkness for ever!"

The ruler was dismissed, with an answer to his petition: "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed," or, according to thy faith, "so be it done unto thee." He went back to his house, accompanied by his friends, and in the same hour his servant was healed.

Several lessons may be learned from this instructive narrative. It teaches, that servants should commend themselves to their masters by their faithfulness and diligence; and that masters should feel a lively interest in the welfare of their servants. It shows that believing application to Christ, on the behalf of others, is very acceptable to him, and shall not be disregarded.

The improvement, however, which Jesus himself made of it was to this effect: It is a great mercy to have religious advantages, but they will add to our guilt and misery if they are not improved. The centurion, who had been brought up as a Gentile, believed in Christ as the Messiah; while the Jews, who had known the Scriptures from

their youth, refused to be convinced. It is so in these days: many among the heathen receive the gospel with gladness, while those who live in professedly Christian lands, who have heard it from their earliest childhood, slight and reject it. The children of pious parents and ancestors should especially take warning: they may be called "the children of the kingdom," and may expect to sit down with their holy fathers in heaven; but if they are without faith in Christ for themselves, they will certainly be cast out; while believing Hindoos from the east, and praying negroes from the west, shall sit down with Christ on his throne.

It was immediately after the miracle of healing the centurion's servant, that our Lord solemnly warned the inhabitants of Capernaum, where he had performed many miracles: "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." Did it profit by these repeated reproofs? The answer is to be found in its history. The city fell into decay, and was made desolate by war, till at length it became a mass of ruins. So complete has been its destruction, that even the spot on which the city stood is doubtful. A similar doom was also pronounced against Bethsaida and Chorazin.* "The towns of Capernaum,

* "The very names of Chorazin and Bethsaida have perished: no one knew of such names, nor of any thing which could be moulded to resemble them."—*Dr. Robinson's Researches in Palestine*. Another traveller found six poor fishermen's huts near the supposed site of Capernaum, and all around were the scattered ruins of buildings, hewn stones, and broken pottery.

Bethsaida, and Chorazin," says Hardy,* "were once exalted to heaven; but they heeded not the day of their visitation, and they are now desolate. It is a solemn fact, the voice of which ought to be listened to with attention, that there is no place mentioned in the New Testament, as having rejected the mission of the Saviour, or refused the offer of mercy made to it by himself and his disciples, but bears evidence, in a degree beyond all others, either in its history or present condition, of the wrath of God: and as surely as the denunciations of old were fulfilled against the guilty cities that put out from their dwellings the candle of the Lord, so surely will still more awful threatenings be fulfilled against us, if we neglect to profit by the light that shines at present so brightly on the world."

RAISING TO LIFE OF A WIDOW'S SON.

LUKE vii. 11—17.

JESUS left Capernaum the day after he had raised the centurion's servant, and proceeded along the road that led to the little city of Nain, which lay about eighteen miles distant. Many disciples and much people followed him, doubtless expecting to see other wonders done.

It may be asked, Had any one sent for him, that he now directed his way to this town? There was a work of mercy to be done, and he came this distance to perform it. As he drew nigh to the city, a funeral procession was seen coming from its gate, in slow and solemn array; they were bearing a body, according to their custom, without the walls of the town, to lay it in the

* *Notices of the Holy Land.*

grave.* On a frame for carrying the dead, lay the



ORIENTAL FUNERAL.

body of a young man, covered with a linen

* Carne describes a funeral procession, as seen by him in Egypt. First walked three or four men abreast at a slow pace, singing in a mournful voice. The corpse was borne after them on the shoulders of six bearers, on an open bier, completely covered, and followed by a number of women, who uttered loud cries at intervals, to show their sorrow.

cloth. A mother walked behind weeping, for she had lost an only son. Her case was indeed pitiable. She had no one to help to bear her loss; she had already followed her husband to the grave. Perhaps, she had often thought that her son would supply the loss of his father; and at length he had arrived at an age to be her prop and comfort. But he was now dead, and with him had died her fondest wishes and dearest hopes; the name of her family would now perish out of Israel—the greatest of all afflictions to a Jewish mother.

All survived in him alone,
All in him alone are dead,
In one ruin overthrown,
Life's last charities are fled:
What, alas! is left for her,
But in yonder sepulchre,
Where her earthly hopes shall lie,
There to lay her down and die.

Yet there was more than human help at hand. Jesus saw her deep distress, and Divine compassion filled his heart. He drew nigh—not to inquire whose corpse they bore to the grave; for he knew all the circumstances of the case. They did not ask him to interpose, for they understood not as yet that he could raise the dead. Stepping in advance of the crowd that stood around him, he approached the weeping mother, and addressed to her the words of kindness, “Weep not.” Had he not designed to raise her son, it would have been almost unkind, as it would have been in vain, to have told her not to weep. But he first spoke, to arouse her attention. In a moment he would turn her sorrow into joy; yet he would not allow her for that moment to remain unnoticed.

He touched the bier, for the bearers to stand still; and at his signal they stood, bearing their burden. The widow is awed and affected with the manner of him who spoke, while the mourners stand in doubt as to the cause of the interruption. The disciples gather around, in expectation of some mighty deed. He has cured diseases, and cast out demons, can he indeed bring back from the unseen world the spirit of the departed? It was but a moment's pause, and their uncertainty was at an end.

With that voice which shall one day call our dead bodies from the grave, he cries, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" when "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." In an instant, the blood again flowed through his veins; the once cold frame was warm with life, the pale hue of his face yielded to the glow of health, and he sat up. In a few moments "he began to speak." The Scriptures say no more; yet may we not suppose that his lips first broke forth in praise to God, mingled with words of affection to his delighted mother, and of gratitude to his kind Deliverer?

Those who carried the bier now rested it on the ground, the young man stepped from it, and Jesus, taking him by the hand, presented him to his mother. "Is it indeed my son! can it be my child! Oh, yes! I feel his embrace, I see the beaming of his eyes, I hear again the tongue that was silent in death. It is my son—my only son!" But who can describe the feelings of the young man, as he started into life from the dead; the emotions of joy which the widow felt in receiving her son back to her arms; or the astonishment of the spectators, as

they beheld this proof of the Saviour's power over death! The procession that had left the house in sorrow, now returned to it with joy: the tears of the mourners were turned into songs of gratitude; and the funeral ceremonies were changed into the rejoicings of a festival. Jesus beheld the happiness he had imparted, and then passed on his way to do other deeds of mercy.

Instead of asking whether or not the mother and son became the disciples of Jesus, or wishing to gratify our curiosity on any other point on which the Scriptures are silent, let us rather gather a few useful lessons for ourselves.

1. The funeral of the widow's son reminds the young of the uncertainty of life. God has ordained that all shall die: we may die early, we may die suddenly; we should be prepared to die. The strongest and the fairest are as the flowers of the field, which in the morning look fresh and beautiful, but "in the evening they are cut down, and withered," Psa. xc. 6. Should they live out their little day, how soon are they gone! But do all bud, and blossom, and gradually decay? Look around, and behold: some are nipped in the bud; some are suddenly broken from their stem, just as they are about to put forth all their beauty; and others are cut down while yet in their prime. Let, then, the young reflect, as they see the mourners go about the streets—"I too *must* die. If that were my funeral, where would my soul now be? Have I a happy eternity in view, when the few short days of life are past!"

2. Christ has also power to raise those who are "dead in trespasses and sins." He who raised the body, can raise the soul. To the young he says,

“Arise *now*.” Arise, and give the affections of your youth to Him who alone is worthy of them. Do it now, for your own sake—for the sake of anxious parents. Are you the son, or daughter, of a pious widow? Oh! how would her heart rejoice to receive you as from the dead, “born again” to a life of holiness! Her joy would be more lasting than that of the widow of Nain; for she received her son back to life only to live with her on earth for a few fleeting years, and then again to be separated by death: but you would be welcomed as one with whom the joys of heaven would be shared throughout eternity.

NUMBERS CURED IN CITIES AND VILLAGES.

MATT. ix. 35; LUKE viii. 1—3.

THE fame of the preceding miracle was spread far and wide: it was an event unheard of since the days of Elijah and Elisha, that the dead should be raised to life. The report was even carried into the dungeon where John the Baptist lay in bonds. When he heard of this, and other of the mighty deeds of Jesus, he sent two of his disciples, that they might ascertain that he who did such things was the true Messiah. They came, and were convinced; for, in the same hour, sight was given to the blind, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf had the gift of hearing, the dead were raised, and many were delivered from their infirmities and plagues. John’s disciples returned, and told him all they had seen. Jesus then went on a tour through every city and village in those parts, “healing every disease among the people,” and “preaching the gospel of the kingdom.”



LAKE OF GALILEE, LOOKING TOWARDS THE COUNTRY OF THE
GADARENES.

CHAPTER VII.

What Jesus did in one day—Blind and dumb demoniac restored—Pharisees again oppose—State of a sinner—The sea of Galilee—The tempest stilled—Voyage of life—Presence of Christ in times of danger—The country of the Gergesenes—Demoniacs restored—Tombs in which they abode—Destruction of the herd of swine—Ancient notices of demoniacal possession—The great change in a sinner—Misery of being given up by Christ.

If every word and every deed of mercy were recorded, of even one day in the ministry of our Lord, how interesting and instructive would be the narrative! Though it is thought we have not a complete history of any single day, yet we have

several things stated as done on the same day, which will show how unwearied he was in doing good. In the morning, he began by casting out a devil; after which, at great length, he addressed the pharisees, who cavilled at the miracle: he then walked some distance to the sea-side, and spake the parables of the sower, the tares, the grain of mustard-seed, and several others: he next instructed his disciples privately: in the evening, he crossed over the sea, and stilled a great tempest: and on landing on the opposite coast, cast out a multitude of unclean spirits.

On the morning of the day, our Saviour was passing through a village with his disciples. Several pious women, from gratitude, followed in his train, to minister unto him: for they had been healed by him of various diseases, or else delivered from the possession of the devil. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, the steward of Herod's household, Susanna, and many others. We have no particulars of the casting out of the seven devils from Mary, nor of the cures wrought on the rest.

BLIND AND DUMB DEMONIAK RESTORED.

MATT. xii. 22—30; LUKE xi. 14—26.

As this company made their way along the village, there was brought to the Saviour one possessed of a devil. The evil spirit had exerted his cruel power in depriving him of sight and speech. The afflicted man could not appeal by words to the Saviour's compassion; he stood before him with his sightless eyeballs, and his mute tongue, in bondage to the devil. What a spectacle of affliction to excite the pity of His heart. As

Christ glanced an eye of mercy on him, his lips spoke his release; and in an instant, Satan was forced to surrender his captive, and flee away. The man was now restored; his tongue was unloosed, and his eyes were opened to behold the world again. How great an event is recorded in the sacred narrative in three or four lines!

The people inquired one of another, "Is not this the Son of David?" Is not this the Messiah, for whom we have so long waited? Surely this must be He of whom the prophets spake, that he should make the blind to see, and cause the tongue of the dumb to sing? Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. The envious pharisees shared not in the joy: to them it was an occasion of aggravated sin. They could not deny that the miracle was real; and to account for it as a natural event would be absurd: it was certain that the man had been blind and dumb; and there could be no doubt that a few minutes before he was a demoniac: his state of mind made him quite incapable of joining in a plot to deceive; and, besides, he was an entire stranger to Jesus. What then could be done? for the people, by daily seeing such signs and wonders, would be quite drawn away to follow Christ. In the awful infidelity of their hearts, they resolved to represent it as a work of darkness, done through the power of Beelzebub, the chief of the devils!

Christ, in a very solemn address, exposed their malice. Would Satan act against himself? Would he help to overthrow his own kingdom, and ruin his own cause? Would he expel his own agents? No; Satan, like a strong man armed, guards his house, until a stronger than he comes and casts him out, Luke xi. 21, 22. Those who

are on his side should act for his interest, and support his power. Instead of this, the teaching and conduct of Christ were designed to overthrow the kingdom and to deliver the Jews from the dominion of Satan. But a hard and unbelieving heart will lead wicked people to say any thing, however base, improbable, and false.

In the deaf and dumb demoniac we see an emblem of the sinner. Satan dwells in him, as in his own house: he controls the eyes, the tongue, the heart, every power and faculty which a man possesses, 2 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Tim. iv. 4. When the sinner is converted, then Satan is cast out, and Jesus takes possession of the heart. Then, as in the miracle, the man is brought to his right mind; his tongue is tuned to the praise of God, and the eyes of his mind are opened to behold the glory and love of Christ. But there are unbelieving men now, as when our Lord was on the earth, who scorn the change which is made by religion, and ascribe it to a bad motive, rather than to the right cause.

THE TEMPEST STILLED.

MATT. viii. 23—27; MARK iv. 35—41; LUKE viii. 22—25.

OUR Lord now departed from the village, and went down to the sea side; and, though he knew that his watchful enemies were lying in wait to turn his words against him, he still continued to teach the people. He again entered a ship, and from thence spake many of his beautiful parables.*

* "The margin of the lake takes a turn to the south-east, the hills approach close to the shore, and the pathway is considerably above the water. The shore forms a gently sloping cove, with a pebbly beach; and then again it becomes abrupt. It was, probably, in one of these pebbly spots that Jesus was

He now prepared to depart, and directed his disciples to desire the people to return to their homes. The sun had already gone down behind the hills, and the shadows of evening were cast along the beach. Many obeyed the word; while others lingered on the shore, as if reluctant to leave Him who spake as they had never heard a teacher speak before. The disciples now thrust their boat from the land, spread the sails, and made ready to depart to the other side of the lake; while many of the people who had come across the water to hear Christ preach, and others who had fishing boats, crowded their little barks, and sailed in his company.

We may suppose, that as they left the shore it was nearly dark, the sea was smooth and calm, and the cool night air blew gently from the mountains. The Saviour, wearied with the toils of the day, lay down on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship, near the steersman's place, and soon fell asleep. He had truly a human body, though without sin; and as his journeyings and preaching had worn out his strength, he sought repose, to recruit himself for new labours for the good of man.

The day had been pleasantly and profitably spent, and it was less than an hour's sail across the lake, when the disciples would find rest after the exertions in which they had shared. Perhaps, as the boat was gently bearing them over the rippling waves, and their Master lay asleep in the walking, when the people gathered around him, till the pressure of eager listeners was so great, that he had to enter into a ship, from which he spake the parable of the sower, and the whole multitude stood on the shore."—*Narrative of Scottish Mission of Inquiry among the Jews.*

stern, they conversed together on what they had seen and heard that day: they had witnessed fresh proofs of the Saviour's wisdom and power, and were filled with admiration; they now thought their faith in him was too strong ever to be shaken. But it was soon to be severely tried: danger was at hand, when they least expected it; for "suddenly there came down a great storm of wind on the lake, and there arose a great tempest on the sea;" or, as the words used by the sacred writers express, "impetuous as a hurricane; terrible as a rending earthquake."* Now the fury of the wind drove the little bark over the tops of the billows, or whirled it round in a fearful eddy. One moment, it rose on the mountain waves; the next, it sunk as though it would plunge to the bottom of the sea. The little ship strained and creaked under the fierceness of the tempest, and the boatmen were alarmed for their safety. The tattered sail; the bending mast; the rushing of the sea over the sides, which was fast filling the vessel, increase their dismay. They shift the tackling, and lighten the ship, in vain. What can be done? Another heave of the billows, and they may sink to a watery grave. Oh! how they look and long for home! "Their soul is melted because of trouble: they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end," *Psa. cvii. 26, 27.*

The disciples are astonished that their Master

* "The mountains in some places come close to the water; and towards the north, we could discover a far higher chain. The waters are clear, and were then perfectly still; but, from their situation between hills and ravines, they must be liable to sudden squalls, and to great agitation during violent gales." *Hardy's Notices of the Holy Land. See also the note on p. 128.*

can sleep in such a storm, and in the midst of so much danger. They awake him with their cries : “ Master, Master! carest thou not? Lord, save us : we perish!” The time had now come for Jesus to show his power over the raging elements. He awoke from his sleep—not to rebuke his disciples for disturbing his repose, but gently to chide them for their want of faith. “ O ye of little faith.” As though he had said: Why are ye so fearful? Do you think you can be lost while I am with you? Can you believe me to be the Messiah, and yet that I shall perish at sea? Did I come from my throne in heaven to save sinners, and shall the purpose and promise of my Father be thus overthrown? Have I not designed that you shall preach my gospel to all nations, and is it possible that this storm shall sink you to a watery grave? Oh! why have you so little faith?

He now rose from his place of repose: no fear was in his countenance. With his usual serenity and dignity, he stretched out his hand toward the sea, and said, “ Peace, be still!” instantly the winds hushed their roaring, and the fury of the waves was lulled into “ a great calm.” When a tempest has been tossing the waters mountains high, it is long before there is a *great* calm: the sea continues to rock to and fro for hours after the winds are hushed; but now, the waters subsided in a moment.

The Saviour wakes from his repose,
And eyes the storm with look serene;
He speaks!—the listening water flows
Calm as in Eden’s peaceful scene:
The winds his high commands obey,
And in soft murmurs die away.

Those on board were astonished; they were as men snatched from the brink of the grave: the very suddenness of their deliverance only the more bewildered them, and they said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" A light breeze now gently bore them across the lake to the country of the Gadarenes.

In the preceding miracles, the Divinity of our Saviour has been noticed; it is also strikingly displayed here. It is God only who can still the noise of the waters; he who at first made the sea can alone control its rage, Job xxxviii. 11; *Psa.* lxxv. 7; cvii. 25, 29. The Scriptures plainly declare that Jesus made all things. "He created heaven, and the things that therein are; and the earth, and the things that therein are; and the sea, and the things which are therein," *Rev.* x. 6; *Col.* i. 16; *John* i. 3. How easy, then, was it for him to command the things he had made, and to say, "Peace, be still!" The words used by the evangelist are singularly forcible—"He rebuked the waves:" for as a master, who, waking up, finds his servants in confusion, and addresses them in a commanding tone, Jesus, beholding the commotion of the elements, said to the winds, "Silence;" to the waves, "Keep still;" to all nature, "Be calm." "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled," *Psa.* lxxvii. 16.

1. This world is like the sea, and we are the voyagers over its waters. Happy are all those, whether their voyage be long or short, stormy or calm, who are at last brought safely to the heavenly rest!

2. Jesus could have given his disciples a pleasant

voyage over the lake; but, by permitting the storm, his power was seen, and their faith was tried: so God could bring us through this world without affliction and trouble; but he knows they are for our good; they teach us to depend on him, lead us to earnest prayer, and make us long for heaven.

3. How happy are those who have Jesus with them in times of danger! No storm can arise without his permission, and he can safely conduct them through it. He has declared, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee," Isa. xliii. 2. His eyes are always upon them; for in heaven he neither slumbers nor sleeps. Still, he will have his people call upon him; and, if he at any time seems to disregard their prayers, it is only to make them more earnest and importunate.

THE DEMONIACS OF GADARA.

MATT. viii. 28—34; MARK v. 1—20; LUKE viii. 26—39.

THE boat, in which were Jesus and his disciples, arrived safely in the country of the Gadarenes, or Gergesenes, on the opposite side of the sea. This was the land that fell to the lot of half of the tribe of Manasseh, and was sometimes called Trachonitis, Luke iii. 1; and in the Old Testament, "the land of the Gergashites," Neh. ix. 8. Immediately after he had landed, he wrought a miracle on two demoniacs.

In comparing the Gospels, there are found what appear to us slight variations, which often arise from one evangelist stating a fact more largely than the others. This is a common thing in the writings of historians generally: but our confidence in their correctness, however, is not thereby

weakened. Those who have studied the sacred writings, have shown that the apparent differences can be fairly reconciled.

In the account of the demoniacs, there are two variations, which may be easily adjusted. Matthew states, that there were two possessed men who came to Jesus. Mark and Luke mention only one, though they do not say there were not any more. It may have been, that attention was more drawn to the one that was more fierce and unmanageable than the other; and, as he belonged to the city, he was better known to the people; besides, he was remarkable for his grateful conduct after he was delivered: his case, therefore, is recorded in particular, as most strikingly showing the power of Christ over unclean spirits.

The miracle was wrought in the country of the Gergesenes, according to Matthew; but Mark and Luke say it was in the country of the Gadarenes. On referring to a map, it will be seen, that Gergesa and Gadara were two cities in the same district; and the country lying between them was sometimes called after one city, and sometimes after the other. Instead, then, of these differences leading us to doubt the statements of the sacred writers, they rather convince us that their accounts are true.

Before the disciples could recover from their surprise, after the quelling of the storm, they were called to witness a new proof of the almighty power of their Master. From the tombs on the outside of the city, two demoniacs came running toward them. One of these unhappy creatures was especially an object of terror. As he rushed forward to throw himself at the Saviour's feet, his

wild and wretched look made the people start aside with alarm. He had an unclean spirit, and was now a homeless wanderer on the mountains, where his doleful cries had been often heard, both night and day, as he fled up and down their steep: or else he was seen sitting in one of the caves or buildings, used for the burial of the dead, where he spent his rage on himself, cutting himself against the rocks, or with the sharp stones he found in the desert. His clothes were torn in his madness, and cast away. To save him from further harm, his friends had bound him with chains and fetters, but he snapped them asunder with his violence, and again escaped to the wilderness; and as he had now become exceeding fierce, and full of mischief, no one dared to approach him. By day, he was restlessly roaming about on the mountains, as led by the evil spirit; and at night, seeking a shelter in his gloomy and unclean abode.* The charity of ancient times had provided no asylum for these miserable beings; they were left to roam abroad as objects of terror and

* "The sepulchres of the Jews were made so large, that persons might walk into them. The rule for making them was this: He that sells ground to his neighbour to make a burying place, must make a court at the mouth of the cave, six feet by six. It was in one of these chambers, or cupolas, which were built over the sepulchre, that the demoniacs probably had their dwelling."—*Dr. E. Clarke's Travels in the Holy Land.*

"As I was not induced to accept the offer made me to remain at Tiberias, I left it early the following morning, coasted along the lake, and trod the ground celebrated for the miracle of the unclean spirit, driven by our Saviour among the swine. The tombs still exist in the form of caverns, on the sides of the hills that rise from the shore of the lake; and, from their wild appearance, may well be considered the habitation of men exceeding fierce, possessed by a devil. They extend for more than a mile from the present town."—*Captain Light's Travels in Egypt and the East.*

pity to all who knew them. We can only faintly conceive of the misery of such a condition.

If we had seen the man, feelings of pity would doubtless have filled our hearts, though we might have fled from his presence with alarm. Yet there was One who feared not the rage of the devils. Moved by compassion, he had crossed the stormy lake, to destroy their power over the unhappy captives.

The unclean spirit would have fled from Christ, but he was secretly drawn into his Divine presence. Using the members of the man, he fell down, and worshipped; it was the homage of fear, not of love. He dreaded the Saviour's power, and cried, with terror, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Thus acknowledging the Divine nature of Christ, and also disproving the charge of the pharisees, that he was in league with fallen spirits. There was in the demon's address a mixture of defiance and alarm. "What have we to do with thee? thou art not our master: we have no Saviour in the Son of God; and yet we know that thou wilt be our Judge. But the time has not come, the day of judgment has not arrived; cast us not, then, into the deep prison of hell, there to be tormented before the long dreaded time."

Whether or not the people that stood around heard the cries of the spirit, we do not know; but, that they might be affected with the dreadful case of the man, our Lord asked the evil spirit, "What is thy name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." The name he had adopted was a word applied to a division of the Roman

army, amounting to six thousand soldiers; though it may here express, not that precise number, but a large band of devils, who held dominion in the man. The spirit was unwilling to lose his power, and again implored that he might not be cast out of the country, and into the doleful pit of hell, in which fallen spirits are confined "in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day," Jude 6. He would rather dwell on earth, though it were in a herd of swine. Or, he may have hoped that if he were not cast out of the country, he might regain possession of the man, when Christ had departed. Or, did he expect, by damaging the property of the inhabitants, to prejudice them against the doctrines of Christ? Whatever was his object, it was known to the Saviour.

"If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go." The Jews were not allowed to eat swine's flesh, Lev. xi. 7; it was also contrary to the law to keep it, or to traffic in it. Swine were regarded as unclean animals; and it is also said, that one reason why they were forbidden as food was, that their flesh was supposed to promote leprosy, and other diseases, in an eastern climate. Gadara, however, being a Roman garrison, and situated in an extreme part of the land, many Jews, for the sake of profit, broke the law, selling this animal to the Gentile soldiers, by whom it was much valued. To punish the Gadarenes, or perhaps that the malice of the fallen spirits might be seen, Jesus permitted them to enter into the swine, when the whole herd of two thousand ran furiously down the steep, and were drowned in the sea.

The swineherds, who are commonly mentioned in history as infamous and wicked persons, were filled with alarm, and ran to the city, where they told what had been done. The inhabitants hastened to the shore. To them the present was a favourable season, if they would but seize it. Christ was now in their country, of whose works of mercy they may have often heard; but the loss of their swine excited their anger. They came to him, but it was not to bring their sick to be healed—not to listen to the gospel of peace—not to thank him for casting out the legion from their countryman: they drew nigh, it may be, to punish him as the destroyer of their swine. But they were awed, as they beheld the man at the feet of Christ—not now naked, and cutting himself with stones; but clothed, and calm, and happy: no longer running about with unrestrained madness, but in the full enjoyment of his bodily and mental powers. The people were seized with fear at what they saw, and their guilty consciences led them to apprehend that further judgments would come upon them, if Christ remained in their country. They desired him to depart: he did leave them, to return no more.

As he entered the ship, the grateful man who had been restored, hastened to the shore, and entreated that he might be allowed to follow, as one of his disciples. He may have feared that, after the departure of Christ, the Gadarenes would revenge themselves on him as the cause of losing their swine; or that the legion would regain possession of his body. And he may even have thought that his future health and happiness would depend on his being near the person of his gracious Deliverer. Whatever were the thoughts of his

heart, his request was not granted; he was sent to tell to his friends "the great things that *God* had done for him." He at once obeyed, took leave of the Saviour and his disciples, and went forth through Decapolis, or the district of the ten cities, and published abroad "the great things *Jesus* had done for him:" thus showing that he had faith to discern that Jesus was Divine. May we not hope, that he was made a blessing in the country where he had long been only an object of terror?

1. Personal actions, as speaking, coming out of the man, and going into the swine, are here ascribed to the spirits, which, with their dread of the coming judgment, show that it was a case of real possession. Josephus, Lucian, Plutarch, and other Jewish and heathen authors, mention demoniacs as well known in their days, and state the effects of such possessions in the same way as the evangelists represent them. By our Lord casting out the legion, he showed that he came to destroy the empire of Satan, and seemed to foretell that, wherever his doctrine should prevail, idolatry and vice should be put to flight.*

2. In the Gospel narrative of the man at Gadara, we see the misery of those who are under the power of Satan. He now works by sin in the heart, as fatally as he did by the indwelling of a legion in the human body. His dominion is the same, though the effects are different. He drives the wicked down the descent of sin, and plunges them in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

3. In the calm and happy state of the man

* Bishop Pearce, "Miracles of Jesus Vindicated."

when delivered, we have represented to us the great change which is made in those converted by the grace of Christ. They once lived only to injure themselves, and distress others; now they are in their right mind, and as humble disciples sit at the feet of Jesus. They are clothed with the garments of salvation, and the robes of holiness. They are no longer degraded and ungovernable, living, as it were, among the dead; but they now serve a new Master, and in humility hear his words, while new pleasures and new objects engage their best affections.

4. When delivered from the power of Satan, we should make known the love and compassion of the Redeemer. Gratitude will make this duty pleasant, nor shall we think any labour too great for Him who has done so much for us.

5. How dreadful is it for sinners, like the inhabitants of Gadara, to desire Christ to depart from them! If he is rejected, there is no other Saviour; if he depart, they are undone for ever. History informs us, that a few years after the rejection of our Saviour, when a Roman army entered the country of the Jews, the city of Gadara was the first that fell: after suffering all the horrors of a siege, it was taken by storm, and burned to the ground. A few stones are now shown, as all that remains of this once populous place. If impenitent sinners refuse the offer of salvation, the judgments of God will overtake them, and they shall perish for ever.



MOUNTAINS OF GALILEE, ON THE ROAD FROM NAZARETH.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sanctified affliction—A ruler applies to Christ—A parent's anxiety for the life of his child—Jesus accompanies the ruler—An interruption by the way—A woman relieved of twelve years' affliction—Jesus at the house of Jairus—Mourning at funerals—The ruler's daughter raised—Two blind men restored—A dumb man cured—Miracles wrought in one afternoon—Envy of the pharisees—Solemn admonitions for the young—Perseverance in prayer—What is faith?

THE rich and the poor equally need the mercy of Christ. When he was on the earth, "the common people heard him gladly;" but, generally, the learned were too wise in their own esteem to listen to his instructions; the nobles were too

proud to be taught by one in the form of a servant; and the rich were too much at ease in the world to attend to the self-denying doctrines which he taught. However, in the town of Capernaum, there were three persons of station and authority who came to our Lord: a nobleman of Herod's court, a centurion of the Roman army, and a ruler of the Jewish synagogue. And, in all three cases, it was affliction in their families that brought them to seek his aid. So it is now; many who, in the days of prosperity, keep away from him, are led, in their seasons of distress, humbly to implore his mercy.

RAISING OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

MATT. ix. 18, 19, 23—26; MARK v. 22—24, 35—43; LUKE viii. 41, 42, 49—56.

OUR Lord was in the house of Levi, or Matthew, at Capernaum, when there came to him a person of distinction, named Jairus. He appears to have been a man of credit and piety, and was selected from the principal residents in the town, to be a ruler of the synagogue. His duties were, to direct the performance of Divine worship, and to govern the affairs of the synagogue. There were commonly several of these officers in every town, but one ranked higher than the rest, and was called the president, or "father" of the synagogue. Such, it is thought, was Jairus.

This ruler had an afflicted daughter, now at the point of death: he had heard of the wonders done in the town, and as he despaired of help from any other, he resolved to apply to Jesus. She was his only daughter, perhaps his only child, one on whom all his hopes were placed. He had watched

and guarded her childhood with increasing affection; and now, while she was yet in the bloom of youth, at the early of twelve, he saw her fast sinking into the grave. No doubt, all that skill could do, had been done; and now, as his last hope, he hastened to Christ.

We may suppose we see him, with anxious look, inquiring, as he went along, the way to the house of Levi, and reasoning in his mind, "He healed the nobleman's son, who was in the last extremity, and raised up the centurion's servant, who was beyond human cure; to this blind man he gave sight, to that leper he restored health, and I have heard that he relieved a paralytic who had been thirty and eight years diseased. The fame of his deeds of mercy has reached my ear, nor can I find that he ever turned any suppliant away. I will try what he will do for me: surely, he will hear me also, when I ask him to heal my child!"

He arrived at the house where Jesus was instructing the people, and falling at his feet, he worshipped him. With all the earnestness of a parent pleading for the life of a child, "he besought him greatly" to come immediately to his house, for his "little daughter,"* was at the point of death. The pharisees were present: it was but lately they were inquiring, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" and now they behold one at his feet, paying him the highest honours.

He had faith in Christ's healing power, though

* She was in her twelfth year. The Talmud defines, that a daughter, till she had completed twelve years, was called "little," or "a little maid;" but when she became of the full age of twelve years, and one day over, she was considered a "young woman."—*Lightfoot.*

it was not so strong as the Roman centurion's, who believed that he was able to heal at a distance, Matt. viii. 8; while Jairus thought it was necessary for him to come to the house, and that, after the manner of the Jewish prophets, he must lay his hands on the child.

Jesus did not keep the anxious father in suspense, for he was ever willing promptly to attend to the cry of distress. He might, as in former instances, have commanded a blessing without leaving the spot where he sat; but there was another miracle to be wrought by the way; therefore he arose, and went forth, followed by a large number of the people.

Jairus led the way: affection for his child urged his speed along the road. Oh, the animating hope of again receiving her to his arms in health! Every moment was precious, lest she should die before they arrived; but the tardy and heedless crowd thronged the pathway, and hindered their progress. And now a more prolonged delay arose!

A WOMAN CURED.

MATT. ix. 20—22; MARK v. 25—34; LUKE viii. 43—48.

IN the crowd was a poor afflicted woman, who had probably been an eye-witness of the Saviour's power, or had conversed with those on whom it had been mercifully exercised; and the thought had arisen in her mind, that, if she applied, she might also obtain a cure. Her case was very grievous, and of long standing: for twelve years she had been oppressed with the affliction. In her anxiety to have her health restored, "she had suffered many things of the physicians." She

had used the means which appeared likely to restore her health, and this was right: for if we say we trust in God, while we refuse those means which are suited to our case, we only tempt him; while to depend on them alone, is to dishonour him. She had freely parted with her property, in hope of finding health; but as year succeeded year, "instead of getting better, she rather grew worse;" when, at length, she found herself reduced to poverty, unable to earn her living, and her disease pronounced incurable.

In this hopeless state, she heard that Jesus was near. She formed her resolution in faith, and hastened to join the multitude as they passed along. The crowd heedlessly thrust her aside, as she struggled to reach our Lord. Another effort, and then another, and at length she was by his side. And now her courage failed her; she dared not tell him of her misery, but shrunk, fearing and trembling, behind him. It is possible she had heard of "the multitude" who, a short time before, "sought to touch him; for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all," Luke vi. 19.

She reached forth her trembling hand, and silently and secretly touched the border, or fringe, of his outer garment—the square mantle, or vesture, thrown over his shoulders.* Like as the subjects of an eastern prince, when presenting their petitions, touch the end of his robe, as an

* "The Jewish mantle, or upper garment, was considered as consisting of four quarters, called, in the oriental idiom, wings. Every wing contained one quarter, whercat was suspended a tuft of threads, or strings, according to the command in Numb. xv. 38; Deut. xxii. 12. What are there called fringes, are those strings; and the four quarters of the vesture are the four corners."
—*Dr Campbell.*

act of submission; so she, in like manner, expressed her reverence and faith, and in a moment she felt health return to her feeble frame.

After the first emotions of surprise and joy, she was about to retire unseen, when Jesus, who knew that from himself, as the source of life and health, healing virtue had gone forth, turned about in the crowd, and inquired, "Who touched my clothes?" Not that he needed to be informed, for he knew who had received the benefit. Nor was he about to chide the trembling woman for her boldness. He designed that she should confess him before the assembled throng, that her faith might be manifested, and Jairus encouraged; whilst, at the same time, his Divine omniscience and power should be displayed before them all.

"Master," said the disciples, "thou seest the multitude on all sides: it is impossible, in such a crowd, to avoid pressing against thee; and dost thou inquire, Who touched me?" Our Lord knew that it was not the accidental pressure of the people, but the touch of faith; and then graciously looked toward the woman, who, perceiving that she was discovered, cast herself at his feet, confessed what she had done, and that she had obtained a cure. No word of reproof was heard; but, to remove her fears, and complete her joy, his lips confirmed her deliverance. "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole:" thy faith is the means, the instrument, of thy recovery; the power, the virtue, was not in the garment, but in me.—From that hour, the woman was healed of her disease.

JESUS AT THE HOUSE OF JAIRUS.

THIS miracle wrought, Jairus again prepared to lead the way, while the Saviour is yet speaking; perhaps, according to his custom, improving the woman's recovery to her spiritual good; and the disciples and the multitude are already on their progress. The cure that had just been effected must have encouraged the hope of the anxious father. He had heard by report, but now he had witnessed, the miraculous power of the great Teacher. It was as though he already embraced in his arms the restored child; when messengers are seen hurrying along the road: they come from the ruler's house, and soon relate the painful tidings, that it is now of no further use to trouble the Master, for the child is dead—gone beyond the reach of prayer and human help! Oh, how the father's heart must have sunk within him, as he turned aside to weep; while the thought, probably, arose within him, that had it not been for the delay, his daughter might yet have lived!

This new distress only still further displayed the compassion of Christ. He immediately turned to the afflicted parent, to console and encourage him. "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe, and she shall be made whole." Fear not, since I am with thee. All shall be well, hopeless as the case appears to you. Your child shall live; for I have as much power over the dead as the dying; I can as easily bring back those who have passed into the eternal world, as I can arrest their entrance to it. And thou shalt yet find that the delay will only make

the mercy the more valued, when it is received only believe.

They now all went forward, and as they came near to the house, they found the people weeping and wailing greatly, and the minstrels making a noise. In this country, we weep in solitude for those we have lost; we conceal our sorrow from the world: but among the eastern nations, the expressions of grief are violent, and are indulged publicly; hired mourners are engaged to feign distress, who shriek with all the appearance of the utmost despair. During the time the body lies in the house,



SLEEPING CHAMBER IN AN EASTERN HOUSE.—MOURNING FOR THE DEAD.

when on the way to the grave, and for eight days

afterwards, the same excessive grief is displayed. Such was the practice in the days of the prophets, Jer. ix. 17, 20; Amos v. 16.* The number of people who attended around the house where one had died, was generally great; and as Jairus was a person of authority, and as his daughter may have been much beloved, many would visit the house, to express their sorrow and sympathy.

Jesus entered the house, attended only by three of his disciples, and the parents of the child. On beholding some of the mourners who were in the room, he commanded them to retire, chiding them for their unseemly noise: "Why make ye this ado, and weep?" He then addressed words of comfort to the agitated parents: "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth;" meaning, that her death was only like a short sleep, and that he should soon awake her, as from her slumbers, into perfect health. When some of the people heard his words, they rudely derided him. There may have been something connected with the disorder of so fatal a character, or the proofs of death were so evident, that they were certain she was now lifeless—that her spirit had departed into the unseen world, "and they laughed him to scorn." He now put all out of the room, except those whom he had selected to be the witnesses of the miracle.

When Elijah raised the dead, he first "cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard his voice," 1 Kings xvii. 21, 22; Elisha "prayed unto the

* Jews, as well as heathens, hired players on musical instruments, when a death occurred in a family, to soothe and calm the feelings of the relatives. Flutes, and a kind of flageolet, were played at the death of children; but instruments of louder tone when an adult died: the hired mourners sung to the music in a soft and plaintive manner.

Lord," when he raised the son of the Shunammite 2 Kings iv. 33; Peter "kneeled down, and prayed," before Dorcas was restored to life, Acts ix. 40; but Jesus, with majesty, and as the Lord of life and death, took hold of the hand of the maiden, as though he were about to raise her from a pleasant sleep, and said, "Talitha cumi," or, "Damsel, arise!" The words were no sooner spoken, than the departed spirit returned to its earthly abode, the colour of health again glowed on her cheeks, the eyes beamed with life, and she arose as it only awoke out of a refreshing sleep. Oh! who can conceive the delight with which the parents pressed their child to their bosoms: while she threw her arms around their necks, and then looked with wonder and surprise at the Saviour!

"The maiden arises! Gaze, gaze with delight,
 'Tis no dream of the mind, no deceit of the sight.
 She arises, she walks! to your fondling embrace
 Take the joy of your home, the sole hope of your race:
 The song for her second nativity raise,
 And the funeral dirge change for anthems of praise.
 But stint not your praise to the blessings of earth,
 This day be the dawn of a heavenly birth!"

It is not every spared life that is devoted to the service of God: nor, it is to be feared, did all become the followers of Christ, who received blessings from him when he journeyed on this earth. It was doubtless then, as it is now; many were raised out of their afflictions, who returned again to the follies of the world, forgetful of Him whose mercy they had experienced. Yet who does not indulge the hope, that this "little maid" became a true disciple of the Saviour?

Again we see the compassion and thoughtful concern of the Saviour: to show that the maid was

really alive, and in full health, Jesus "commanded that something should be given her to eat." In the surprise and joy of receiving back their child to life, the parents might have forgotten that sickness and death had reduced her frame, and that she now needed food to support and nourish life: besides, he designed they should understand, that having restored her by miracle, she was now to be sustained by the use of means.

"The parents and all present were astonished with a great astonishment;" they had hoped he would raise their *sick* child, but to restore their *dead* child was more than had entered into their minds: "but he charged them strictly that they should tell no man what was done." Yet such numbers had gathered about the house, from whom the miracle could not be concealed, that the fame of it was spread throughout all the country. It has been conjectured, that the reason for enjoining secrecy on this occasion was, to prevent the dead being brought to him to be restored to life. Sufficient miracles were wrought to prove him to be the Son of God, but it was not intended needlessly to alter the course of nature.

If our Lord had sought his own ease, the mercy he had just bestowed on the family of Jairus, would have insured him a home, and all the comforts which grateful hearts could offer. What could parents have withheld from Him who had raised a darling child from death? With what delight would the "little maid," have waited upon her kind Deliverer! But his "meat was to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish his work," John iv. 34. He had made the

whole family happy, and now he must go forth to make others happy too.

TWO BLIND MEN RESTORED.

MATT. ix. 27—31.

As he passed from the ruler's house, two blind men, who had heard that he was there, and who waited for his coming out, cried, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" as though they had said, "O, pity our darkness and misery: see how helpless and useless we are. We know thou canst restore to us our precious sight, and we have heard thou hast just raised a child to life; wilt thou not have compassion on us, O thou Son of David?"

In calling Jesus by the name of "Son of David," they showed their faith. The Jews were all agreed that the Messiah should be of the house of David, according to the ancient prophecy, Isa. ix. 6, 7; xvi. 5. The angel Gabriel, in announcing the birth of a son to Mary, referred to this prediction, Luke i. 32; and there was, at this time, a general expectation of his appearance. These two poor blind men openly declared that he had appeared, that he who did such wonderful miracles was the long-expected Messiah; and in this character they humbly claimed his aid. They were, perhaps, the more bold in asking that their eyes should be opened, because to give eye-sight to the blind was one of the peculiar marks of the true Messiah.

Jesus, as a trial of their faith, appeared not to regard their prayer; and they followed him to the house where he was going: as they went along, they repeated their mournful cry, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!"

They groped their way into the house, and Jesus, seeing their perseverance, asked them, "Believe ye, that I am able to do this?" They earnestly declared their faith in his ability: then, touching their eyes, he said, "According to your faith be it unto you," and in an instant they saw all things around them in their beauty and brightness. They were then charged to tell no man of it, probably lest the Jews should seek to make Jesus a temporal ruler. The joy and zeal of the two men, however, led them to disobey the command that was given to them, for they departed and made known through all the country the Saviour's fame.

The gift of sight to these blind men was widely different to the cures sometimes obtained by surgical skill. When a man has his sight restored by human means, it is commonly a tedious and painful operation; and for a long time the sight is very tender, so that objects cannot be seen clearly. Here the blessing was conferred without pain, and in a moment the two men were able steadily to gaze on the objects that were around, in the full light of day. Well might the suddenness and completeness of their cure fill their mouths with praise, and the people with astonishment.

A DUMB MAN RESTORED.

MATT ix. 32—34.

No sooner had these men departed, than another afflicted object waited the healing power of the great Physician. "Behold, they brought to him a dumb man;" and to this was added the still more distressing affliction, of being possessed with a

demon : under the cover of the natural disorder, Satan held his dominion. They presented the poor mute before the compassionate Saviour : we do not read that anything was said ; his case needed not the eloquence of words. The eye of mercy rested on him, and immediately the wicked spirit was cast out, when the man was restored to the use of his speech.

The people exclaimed, with wonder, " It was never so seen in Israel ! " Of all the mighty deeds we have heard of old time, surely they are surpassed by the miracles which we have seen done to-day ! " The admiration of the people," says Dr. Lightfoot, " is extremely natural ; for none of their prophets, not even Moses, had ever equalled Christ in the variety and greatness of their miracles, and the facility with which they were wrought. Here are four miracles, chiefly of the highest kind, performed in the course of one afternoon—the infirm woman, the raising of the daughter of Jairus, the cure of two blind men, and the ejecting of the evil spirit from the dumb."

The pharisees shared not in the joy that was diffused through so many hearts, but in their malice they repeated their wicked charge, " He casteth out the devils through the prince of the devils." Surely, this was the height of blasphemy, the language of Satan, who is the father of lies ! Matt. xii. 32 ; John viii. 44. As they could not deny that miracles had been wrought ; they asserted that they were done by magic, or diabolical assistance. But their hostility confirms the truth of the Gospel miracles ; for " had the Jews been universally or generally converted by them," says Dr. Graves, " the sceptic in our days might

argue, with some appearance of probability, that the facts had been invented to gratify the national propensity, and had been credited without examination or proof. On the contrary, we are now certain that the Gospel miracles were wrought in the presence of enemies, and thus subjected to the severest scrutiny; and that they carried with them conviction to multitudes, notwithstanding the fiercest opposition which national prejudice, bigotry, and vice could excite, and the strictest search which could be made by the most vigilant hostility."

Such were the different effects on those who saw the miracles: what is the improvement which youthful readers should make of them?

1. The early death of the Jewish maiden admonishes them, that none are too young to die. When a beloved child is now laid on a dying bed, there is no Saviour on earth to whom sorrowing parents can apply, with the earnest prayer, "Come down, and raise my son; restore my daughter to health again." Once dead, the state is fixed for ever. Happy will it be for all those who have loved and obeyed Christ in the days of their health! for, when they die, instead of their bodies being raised to life again for a few short years, amidst the sorrows of this world, their souls shall be raised to live with him for ever in the kingdom of heaven.

2. We are encouraged to persevere in prayer. It is true we cannot go to Christ, like Jairus, and plead with him face to face, as a man pleads with his friend; nor can we touch the hem of his garment, like the diseased woman; nor can we follow him from place to place, like the blind

men. Nor need we so act; for he is now in heaven, and men in all countries may now have access to him, at all times, and in all circumstances. We can, however, imitate them by the sincerity and fervour of our prayers, by humbling ourselves at his feet, and by trusting in his power and goodness.

3. In Jairus, and others, who went to Christ, we see what faith is, and how it acts. They applied to him under a sense of their want: they knew that no human power could help them, and they came to him believing that he was able and willing to relieve them. In this way sinners should approach the Saviour. As surely as the virtue that went from him delivered the woman from her disease, so the sinner shall find that his blood cleanseth from all sin; and as certainly as his Divine power raised the ruler's daughter from the dead, so shall he raise up those "dead in trespasses and sins," to live a new life of faith and obedience, and call us forth from the grave at the day of the resurrection.





NAZARETH.

CHAPTER IX.

The love of Christ—Ingratitude and unbelief of the Jews—Jesus rejected by the Nazarenes—Retires into a desert—Feeds five thousand—A beautiful sight—Confidence in providence—Gratitude for mercies—Benevolence and frugality—The Bread of life—The disciples at sea—Sudden storms—Christ walks on the waters—Many miracles—Secret prayer—Tempting God—Healing of the daughter of the woman of Canaan—Maternal love—Perseverance, humility, and faith.

IN tracing our gracious Lord's progress as he went about doing good, we observe the ancient prophecy fulfilled: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," Isa. liii. 3. Deeds of mercy were regarded with

indifference or scorn, and almost every new expression of his love was an occasion for renewed insult. A spirit so pure and tender as his, could not but deeply feel such indignities. If his love had been only human, it would have been quenched by the continued ingratitude and unkindness with which he was every where treated; but it was the love of Him who foresaw what he must pass through, and who, when he actually did endure it, repented not that he had come to save a sinful and unthankful race. His conduct most touchingly illustrates his own benevolent precept: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you," Matt. v. 44.

It was not so much the unkindness of the people, as their unbelief, that deprived them of the blessings he was willing to bestow. In no case was this more evident than among the inhabitants of Nazareth, where he had been brought up.* It might have been supposed that this place would receive peculiar favours at his hand; yet it was otherwise. The Nazarenes knew his humble

* "The situation of Nazareth is very retired, and it is said that, on account of this seclusion, the worthless characters of Galilee resorted thither, till, at length, the town became a proverb for wickedness. In this town, among such a race of men, did the blessed Jesus live thirty years, in calm submission to his Father's will, obeying in obscurity for us."—*Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry, sent out by the Church of Scotland in 1839.*

"Of all the towns of Judea and Galilee, Nazareth was peculiarly despised, as the habitation of the dregs of the people, and as having never produced an illustrious personage. This accounts for Nathanael saying to Philip, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Pilate undoubtedly had it in view, when, by way of mockery, he wrote a title, and put it on the cross, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'"—*Claude.*

family, and his former lowly state, and because he appeared in circumstances no better than their own, they held him in contempt. On his first preaching in the town they tried to kill him, Luke iv. 29; and on his returning to the city after raising the ruler's daughter, "they were offended in him"—rejected him, and the doctrines he taught. They would not come to him for help, so that "he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, because of their unbelief." He then left the town; left the people in all their prejudices and sins, and, as far as it is known, never returned to it again. In every age since then, pride and unbelief have kept men from coming to Christ, to receive the blessings of his grace.

Ill-used and rejected as he was by the Nazarenes, it was not possible that his own sufferings should lead him to forget that he had come to seek and to save the lost. He went a tour through many cities and villages, and as he passed, he taught the people, and "healed every sickness and disease." The evangelists do not record what places were visited during this journey, which is supposed to have occupied several months. How interesting would be the narrative of all Jesus said and did, during this time! and yet all we know is contained in one verse, of about four lines.

FIVE THOUSAND FED BY MIRACLE.

MATT. XIV. 13—21; MARK VI. 31—44; LUKE IX. 10—17;
JOHN VI. 5—14.

THE disciples were sent into different parts to preach the gospel: on their return, they "told him all things they had done, and what they had

taught." After these labours of the Divine Master and his servants, they withdrew into a desert place for rest; for the intrusion of the people had become so great, "that they had no leisure so much as to eat," nor for devotion. They privately crossed the lake, and proceeded to a large tract of uncultivated land, near the city of Bethsaida.* The people soon heard of his departure, hastened round the shore, and got to the place where he was to land, before the boat arrived. Beholding the labour and anxiety of the multitude, he had compassion on them. He saw they were ignorant, yet were willing to be taught; and though he was tired, and they had broken on his retirement, he received them with his usual forbearance and kindness. Soon the sick began to arrive, and were laid around him, while with prayerful words and looks they besought his gracious aid. He glanced an eye of pity on them, and healed them all. Then sitting down on the side of a mountain, he instructed the people in his heavenly doctrine.

This is considered to have occurred about the end of the month of March; and as the season is more advanced in that land than in our country, all the verdure and beauty of an eastern spring were around them. One evangelist notices that "there was much grass in the place," John vi.

* The situation of this town is uncertain. Dr. Clarke mentions a tradition of the scene of the miracle. "As we rode from the village of Hatti towards the sea of Tiberias, the guides pointed to a sloping spot from the height on our right, whence we had descended, as the place where the miracle was performed of our Saviour feeding the multitude: it is therefore called 'The Multiplication of Bread;' as the mount above, where the sermon was preached to his disciples, is called 'The Mountain of Beatitudes.'"

10; and another, that the grass was green,* Mark vi. 39.

Our Lord continued his instructions till the shades of evening began to gather around, when the disciples reminded him that the day was on the decline. Besides, they were in a desert place; the thousands who were attentively listening to his words, were far from their homes, and the disciples add, "The time is now passed"—the time of supper, the chief meal of the Jews, which in that country was commonly after the heat of the day began to abate. It was necessary that the company should be dismissed, that they might find food and rest for the night, in the towns and villages. The compassionate Saviour knew that, in their present exhausted state, they were likely to faint by the way, and he intended that they should sup with him before they departed. "Whence shall we buy bread, that all these may eat?" he inquired of Philip, who was a native of this part of the country, and who might be supposed to know where to procure food. The disciple, astonished at the question, replied that it would take two hundred pennyworth of bread to feed them all. This to them was a large sum; for the Roman penny, or denarius, was equal to sevenpence halfpenny in our money, so that the sum required was equal to about six pounds five shillings; and taking into account the relative

* "This mount was called by my guide, 'The Multiplication of Bread,' or, as I had heard others denominate it, 'The Table of our Lord.' It is remarkable, that at this day there is, 'much grass in the place.' Near it I was joined by a miserable ragged soldier, who had been stationed at the foot of the hill by his pacha, to protect the grass from the depredation of travellers." *Rae Wilson's Travels in the Holy Land*, vol. ii.

values of food and money, as compared with modern times, the real amount would be of much greater value.

Our Lord only added, "Give ye them to eat." It is not my will that this multitude should return, at this hour of the evening, unfed to their homes. The twelve were still ignorant of their Master's design, and inquired if they should go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread: from which it may be inferred, that this was about the sum that Judas, who acted as treasurer to our Lord and his disciples, had in "the bag." Andrew was now sent among the people, to inquire what food they had; when it was found that they had left their homes without provision, except a lad, who had five barley loaves, and two small fishes. We may suppose the dismay of Andrew when he returned and informed his Master, that this was the whole supply which could be found among the numerous and hungry multitude who surrounded them. "How is it possible," Andrew may have been ready to inquire, "to feed five thousand men with such a scanty supply? And then, look at the women and children! they amount to many hundreds also!" Jesus listened to his disciple's report, and calmly directed that the loaves and fishes should be brought to him. The multitude had been crowded together; but now, to obtain order in the distribution of the food, the people were commanded to sit down on the grass, by "hundreds and fifties:" by which may be meant, fifty ranks, each containing one hundred men, or five thousand in the whole. The people obediently submitted to these directions, and formed themselves into order, though the thought may have been in many

hearts, "What can this mean? For what purpose are we thus placed?" while the more pious among them may have recalled to mind the miracle of Elisha, when he fed one hundred men with twenty barley loaves, 2 Kings iv. 42: yet who can supply this large multitude in a desert place?

The disciples perceived that he was about to display his Divine power; and they had witnessed so many proofs of it already, that they made no more objections, but ranged the people as carefully as though they were about to share the plenty of a royal feast.

What a scene was now beheld! The ranks of guests rising in lines, up the slopes of the mountain, and reclining, after the manner of the Jews, at their meals. Their canopy is the evening sky; their table, the grassy earth. Order and silence prevail. There stands the Master of the feast, majesty and benevolence beaming in his countenance, as he looks around on the gathered throng. Before him are laid the five barley loaves and two small fishes. By his side, stand the disciples, with their eyes directed to him, awaiting his commands. In the distance, a few fishing boats are gently making their way across the lake. And now the Saviour takes the scanty and humble provision into his hands before them all, and lifts his eyes to heaven. He first gives thanks to his Father for the supplies of his providence; and then blesses the bread with a peculiar blessing.

The loaves are broken into smaller portions, and the disciples begin to distribute them to the waiting company. They pass in order down the ranks, and with unsparing hand give to every one,

and return to their Lord for a new supply. The fish are likewise divided, and carried round to the people. With what delight do the disciples fulfil their office! while the minds of the multitude are filled with silent wonder.

It is in vain to conjecture the manner in which the loaves and fishes increased, whether the food multiplied in the hands of our Lord, or in those of his disciples; or whether, as one writer* has supposed, it increased in the hands of the multitude. On this point the Scriptures say nothing to gratify a vain curiosity, but simply declare the fact, "They eat as much as they would, and were filled."

The evening meal now ended, Jesus directed, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost;" and, in obedience to his word, the disciples went among the company, and filled twelve baskets, each disciple a basket, with the fragments of the feast.

This miracle is recorded by all the four evangelists, and has been considered as among the most convincing of those wrought by our Lord. Five thousand witnesses could not be deceived for the miracle was done openly, and was easy to be observed. The want of food was known to them all; they were in a desert where it could not be obtained; there was no delay to allow the disciples to buy it in the distant villages; and no secret supplies could have been obtained without detection. The senses of the people convinced them it was real: they *saw* the small provision enlarged more than a thousandfold; they *heard* the blessing given; they *felt* it in their hands;

* Macknight, in his "Harmony of the Gospels."

they *tasted* it, and were satisfied that what they received was real fish and bread. And such was the effect that the miracle had on them all, that they rose, and sought by force to make him a king. Under a Captain who could perform such wonders, they concluded they should soon be able to overthrow their Roman masters. But Jesus sought not this honour from men, and to avoid tumult, he desired his disciples to prepare the ship for their departure.

1. This miracle teaches us confidence in the providence of God. "It is a greater miracle," says Augustine, "to govern and provide for the whole world, than to feed five thousand men with five loaves of bread." What immense supplies are needed every hour of the day! Who can calculate the quantity of food brought into existence every year, for the use of innumerable living creatures, as well as man?

2. Let us show our gratitude for daily food. Our Lord asked a blessing on the provision, and gave thanks before he distributed it to the people; and therein taught us to praise Him from whom we receive all our mercies, and who gives us health to enjoy them. It is his blessing that makes our food nourishing; and a little received in the fear of the Lord, is better than all the dainties of the rich with an unthankful heart.

Ten thousand, thousand precious gifts,
Should daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a grateful heart
That tastes those gifts with joy.

3. Christ has set us an example of relieving the wants of others. He had "compassion" on the multitude; and, as it was in his power to supply their wants, he cheerfully relieved them. It

has been also thought, that the fragments were gathered up, to be given to the poor.

4. We may learn a lesson of frugality. Where there is a plenty of food, there is often great waste; but our Lord, who could create as much as he pleased, and at any time, has shown us that even the "broken victuals" are not to be thrown away. Wasters and prodigals are often brought to want the food which once they despised.

5. We are encouraged to ask for "the bread of life." The multitude followed our Lord to the other side of the lake; thinking, perhaps, he would feed them as he had done the day before; but he improved the miracle by teaching them to labour for the meat which endures unto eternal life. He spoke of himself as the "Bread of life;" and declared, that those who fed on him by faith should never perish, but have eternal life. Many who had professed to be his disciples, so long as he fed their bodies, finding they should get no worldly advantage by following him, turned away, and "walked no more with him."

CHRIST WALKS ON THE WATERS.

MATT. xiv. 22—33; MARK vi. 45—51; JOHN vi. 15—21.

By the time the supper was done, and the fragments collected, it was nearly dark. The disciples were unwilling to obey his direction to retire to the boat: they were probably more disposed to join with the people in proclaiming him as king; or they may have been reluctant to venture on the water without him: but "he constrained them to go into the ship, and to go to the other side before him unto Bethsaida, while he sent the multitude away." The part of the country, where

they had spent the evening, was a district of that city, and on the same side of the lake. It has been supposed that it was separated from it by a creek or bay, which was necessary to be passed, in order to arrive at the town, where they might find rest for the night, and where he could afterwards join them.*

The apostles entered their little bark, and pushed her from the shore; the multitude retired from the spot, doubtless expressing to each other their wonder at what they had just seen; while Jesus made his way up the slope of the mountain, to spend the night in prayer.

The disciples could scarcely have left the shore, when the light breeze that was bearing them on their way, changed into a strong adverse wind. "It was now dark, and the ship was in the midst of the sea: and the sea arose, by reason of a great wind that blew, and the ship was tossed with the waves." They were overtaken by one of those sudden squalls to which the lake is liable.† It was in vain they rowed with all their

* Dr. Doddridge; Bishop Mant.

† "On our asking a Jewish doctor regarding the lake, if there were ever storms upon it? he said, 'Yes; and in the winter the storms are worse than those of the Great Sea.' This quite corresponds with the testimony of Mr. Hebard, one of the American missionaries at Beyrout, who visited the lake in April; and who tells us, that he and his party had encamped at evening close by the lake, when at midnight, all of a sudden, a squall came down upon the lake, so terrible, that they had to hold by their tent-poles for safety.—Some of us awoke at midnight, and, for a short time, sat by the edge of the lake. The darkness had completely enveloped the waters; and now the Saviour's midnight prayers, on these neighbouring heights and shores, seemed a present reality; and the remembrance of the time, when, 'in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto the disciples walking on the sea,' spread an indescribable interest over the sleeping

skill and strength: the contrary wind drove them out of their course into the middle of the lake, towards the distant shores of Capernaum. In such an hour of danger, the remembrance of the time when they were last tossing on these waters must have come over their minds; but then their Master was with them in the boat. "Oh that he were now with us! If we could only call him to our aid, again would he rescue us from our present danger. The same voice that hushed the tempest into peace, would again control the winds and the waves. Alas! he is now far away, nor can our cry of distress reach him amidst the howling of the storm."

The second and third watch had passed away, and they continued toiling at the oar in hope of outriding the storm. They entered on the fourth watch, or about three o'clock in the morning,* and the tempest raged even more fiercely than before. They had been rowing in this state of suspense and alarm from the setting of the sun, and now it was almost the dawn of the day; yet they had only gone about thirty or forty furlongs,† being driven to and fro by the contending elements.

waters. No place, excepting Jerusalem, is so deeply and solemnly impressive as the sea of Galilee."—*Narrative of the Mission of Inquiry sent out by the Church of Scotland*. See also notes on pages 89—91.

* Before the captivity, the night was divided into three watches: namely, the first, or "beginning of watches," Lam. ii. 19; the middle watch; and the morning watch, or "cock watch," in allusion to the cock crowing. They varied in length, according to the season of the year, being much longer in winter than in summer. During the time of our Saviour, the night was divided into four parts: the fourth watch having been introduced among the Jews from the Romans, who derived it from the Greeks.

† Or, four or five miles; reckoning seven and a half Jewish furlongs to an English mile.

“But what vision is yonder? A human-like form,
 By the wind unimpeded, unblench'd by the storm,
 On the waves moving onward is seen:
 The surges supply him a footing; the air
 Waves the folds of his garment, and streams in the air,
 But disturbs not his motion serene.

“Right onward, with purpose determined and clear,
 Right onward the form to the shallop draws near,
 And seems as if passing it by:
 Alarm'd and confounded, its aspect and mien,
 Through the veil of the twilight imperfectly seen,
 'Tis a spirit! the mariners cry.”

Sailors and fishermen have, in all ages, been known for their superstitious fears; and the ancient mariners, in particular, supposed that storms were raised by evil spirits, who presided over the waters. Such fears were probably shared by those who now were tossing in the midst of the sea of Galilee. “They were afraid, and cried out, It is a spirit,” a spirit of the deep. But amidst the noise of the storm, a well-known voice is heard, “Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid.” He speaks not his name, nor need he: in the grey dawn of the morning, they catch a glimpse of his form; and as the vessel rises and falls with the waves, they behold their Master steadily moving along the waters, as easily as on the even pathway of the land.

Through the darkness of the night, from the mountain whither he had retired for prayer “Jesus saw them toiling in rowing.” His eye was on them, though they knew it not; and his hand was round about them for their safeguard. He saw their terror, and heard their despairing cry, and now hastened to their relief. When he came down the mountain to the beach, at that early hour of the morning, “there was none other

boat there," John vi. 22. How then could he reach them on the distant waters, with the surges furiously rolling along the margin of the lake? As the Lord of creation, he stepped from the shore on to the tumultuous sea, and passed uninjured amidst its waves, as though it were dry land on which he trod. It is in vain to inquire how this was done: this we know, it was contrary to the laws of nature, and was clearly a miracle, which almighty power alone could perform. "He walked on the water."

He went himself to their help. He might have spoken from the mountain, and instantly the wind and waves would have obeyed his word; or an angel might have been sent to their aid: but then his disciples would not have had so striking a proof of his love; nor have learned so well that, in all their dangers, he was nigh them for their relief. They had seen his compassion for the multitude, in supplying their wants, and now they find themselves the objects of his peculiar care. In the troubles which they afterwards passed through, the remembrance of this miracle was adapted to strengthen their faith.

When Christ drew nigh to the vessel, he appeared as though "he would have passed them." Peter, with a mixture of boldness and unbelief, earnestly cried, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." To check his vain confidence, and convince him of the weakness of his faith, Jesus invited him to come. He stepped from the ship on to the waters, and for a moment was sustained above them by the power of faith; but the next moment his faith failed: the rolling waves, and the raging winds alarmed him; and though,

like most fishermen, he probably was able to swim, he now "began to sink." The words are very expressive, he felt himself *sinking with such a weight* that he had no hope of saving himself, and expected certainly to sink to the bottom of the sea. Affrighted, he cried, "Lord, save me!" In a moment, the hand of Christ was stretched forth, and caught the sinking disciple, while a gentle rebuke was given, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Still the Saviour stood upborne upon the waves: he might now have continued to walk across the lake, to the astonishment of the inhabitants of the towns on the opposite coasts; but his miracles were not for needless display, nor were they wrought when ordinary means would suffice. He had come through the storm to save his disciples; and having reached them, "he went up unto them into the ship," when they received him with joy. No sooner had he stepped on board than the wind ceased, the storm was lulled, and soon the ship was on the other side of the lake, safely moored on the shores of Gennesareth, not far from the city of Capernaum.

"They that were in the ship were amazed beyond measure;" and falling at his feet, they said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God!" They had heard of the Red Sea opening its waves, when Moses stretched out his rod; and of the dividing of the river Jordan, when Elisha smote it with his mantle; now they had seen in Christ a wonder which proved him to be Divine. To tread on the waves of the sea was declared by Job to be the prerogative of God alone, Job ix. 8; and, among the ancients, the figure of two feet on the water

was a symbol of an impossible thing. Casting themselves at his feet, they worshipped him with lowliest reverence.

MANY MIRACLES NEAR THE SEA OF GALILEE.

MATT. xiv. 34—36; MARK vi. 54—56.

ALTHOUGH the day was only breaking when they came to land, they were observed. It was not possible for Jesus to remain unknown in a part of the country where he had wrought so many wonders. The news was soon spread; and now we meet with another of those animated scenes, which are so briefly and beautifully narrated in the Gospels. "When the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, and brought unto him all that were diseased, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made perfectly whole."

These narratives convey many important lessons.

1. The example of Jesus teaches us the duty of secret prayer. When wearied with the labours of the day, he retired at evening to the mountains and deserts for communion with his Father, and to intercede for man; and then returned with the morning light to his labours of love. In him we see how to unite active exertion with fervent piety. The practice of devotion does not require us to shut ourselves out from the world; nor, on

the other hand, does the most busy life excuse the neglect of prayer.

2. Like the tempest-tossed disciples, the church of Christ, and believers in all ages, are exposed to trials. The ocean of this world is often tempestuous. Darkness has often gathered around, storms have arisen, the hearts of the righteous have begun to fail; and it has been as though the Lord had withdrawn, and left his disciples to their fears. Yet, all the while his eye has been upon them; he has pleaded their cause in heaven; and, after their faith has been severely tried, he has stilled the tempest, and delivered them out of all their trouble.

3. From the conduct of Peter we may be warned not to "tempt God." We tempt him in prayer, when we ask for what he has not promised to give; we tempt him in providence, when we go out of the way of duty, or trifle with temptation. He may then leave us, that we may learn how weak we are, and that if left to ourselves we should certainly perish.

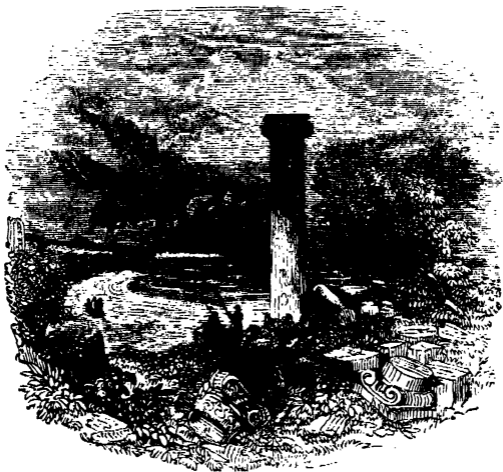
DAUGHTER OF THE WOMAN OF CANAAN HEALED.

MATT. xv. 21—28; MARK vii. 24—30.

HITHERTO all who had sought to Jesus with their afflictions had been relieved without delay. No wonder, then, that the certainty of a cure continued to draw such numbers to him. However, there is a case recorded in which he appeared to hesitate, and even to rebuke the applicant who pleaded at his feet; but, as will be seen, it was in the end only to try her faith, and to make more manifest the love of his heart.

Our Saviour was now entering on the last year

of his public ministry as the "Teacher sent from God:" he had again faithfully warned the opposers of his truth, and had retired to the most remote part of the land of Israel. His human nature needed rest, and for this object he went into the "coasts of Tyre and Sidon," where he was least known. These cities were on the shores of the



RUINS ON THE COAST OF TYRE.

Great Sea, and belonged to Syria, although they were considered in the limits of the Holy Land. Sidon was one of the most ancient cities in the world. Tyre was its colony, and called her daughter, Isa. xxiii. 12; and from its position and wealth, was said by the prophet to be "very glorious in

the midst of the seas," Ezek. xxvii. 25. The "coasts" referred to in the Gospels, were not the parts bordering the sea, but the inland regions belonging to the cities.

Even a short interval of repose was denied our Lord: the fame of his mighty works was widely spread abroad, and his person now was well-known, so that "he could not be hid." No sooner had he come into the country, than "a woman of Canaan, out of the same coasts," heard of his arrival, and besought his aid. She was a Greek, or Gentile, a Syro-phenician, by nation.*

This woman was the mother of a beloved child, a young daughter, now lying in a condition worse than even death itself, for she was torn and tormented by an evil spirit. In all probability the mother was a widow, as no allusion is made to a husband. It is commonly thought that she had been bred in the principles of that idolatry which consisted in the worship of the images of dead men. She may have bowed down to Tammuz, the idol of her native land, Ezek. viii. 14; or

* "The old inhabitants of this tract were descendants of Canaan, the grandson of Noah, who were not driven out by the Israelites; whence this part of the country seems to have retained the name of Canaan, long after the name had ceased in the parts which were taken possession of by the Israelites. The Greeks called the tract inhabited by the old Canaanites, along the Mediterranean Sea, Phenicia; the more inland parts, as being inhabited partly by Canaanites, or Phenicians, and partly by Syrians, who had conquered it. they called Syro-phenicia. Hence this woman is said, by St. Matthew, to be of Canaan, but by St. Mark to be a Syrophenician by nation, as she was a Greek by religion and language." *Dr. Wells's Historical Geography of the Bible.*

The Jews were in the habit of calling all the civilized part of the heathen world by the name of Greeks; the uncivilized portion they termed Barbarians, Rom. i. 14; Col. iii. 11.

paid her vows to Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Sidonians, 1 Kings xi. 5; and had found that they were a vanity, and could not help those who trusted in them; and now she turned to Him of whose fame she had heard. Living on the borders of the Holy Land, she, perhaps, had learned that a great prince was expected, of the house of David; and concluded that he of whom she had heard so much, must surely be the promised One: as such she expresses her faith in him, in the prayer which she offers: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

The singular respect with which she besought his aid, joined to the distressing condition of her child, it might have been supposed would at once have secured the compassion of Jesus. "But he answered her not a word!" This was as severe a check, as it was unexpected. Some would have said, "Not deign to speak! Is it because he cannot help her? or will he not regard a poor Gentile mother? Surely he does not intend to trifle with her grief, or to add insult to her deep affliction?" These, however, were not the thoughts of this Canaanitish woman? Our Lord, who knew her heart, and the strength of her hope, concealed for a time his kind intention, that he might bring out to view her faith and humility, for the instruction of his followers.

The disciples did not understand this silence, and undertook to be her advocates. They had seen his kind and ready manner in relieving the misery of all who came to him, and they were encouraged to speak on her behalf. "Master, send her away;" give her what she asks; grant

her a kind dismissal ; for you see how piteously she weeps, and cries after us as we pass along.

“ I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” was the Saviour’s reply. They had been taught that the benefit of his preaching and miracles was at first to be confined to the Jews ; and now they had no more to say—they were silenced ; but not so the woman. “ Is it so, that I must return to my home, and see my child still under the power of the tormentor ? Shall a wretched Gentile despair of sharing the blessings the Son of David has to give ?”

Jesus now entered the house : she followed, and falling at his feet, worshipped him ; and, in an agony of grief, cried, “ Lord, help me !” Short as was her prayer, it was as though she had said, “ I know I have no interest in the covenant of promise : I am not of the favoured nation of the Jews ; yet I cast myself on thy rich mercy. Do not spurn me from thy feet : help ! oh, help even me, a poor Gentile !”

Still further to prove her, our Lord spake as though he would rebuke her boldness, and entirely cut off all hope : “ Let the children first be filled ; for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto dogs !” He thus spoke according to the prejudices of the Jews, who considered themselves as alone entitled to the blessings which the Messiah should bestow. “ It is not right to deprive the Jews, who are the children of faithful Abraham of any part of those blessings which I have been sent by my Father to give : there are many afflicted persons among them whom I have not yet healed : stay till they are all satisfied, then you Gentiles may have what is left ;

for you know you are regarded as dogs by the Jews."*

What were the thoughts of the disciples, at this moment, we know not. They had hitherto beheld nothing like the scene before them. When had their Master turned away from the sight of domestic distress? Was he, like the most benevolent men, not at all times equally affected by human misery? Had the insults of the pharisees which he had just experienced, and the ingratitude of the multitude he had lately fed, closed his hand of mercy? Were his spirits exhausted by the fatigues of his long journey? Or were his miracles really to be confined to the favoured Jews? Such may have been the questionings of their minds, when they hear again the voice of the woman, pressing her suit.

If her heart had not been humble, she would have turned away in anger after the last answer; but from this unpromising reply she even draws a plea in her own favour. She now meekly ventures to argue: "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the children's crumbs, which fall from their master's table." She owns her unworthiness, yet claims the blessing. "I admit the right of the Jews to those favours which they so bountifully possess; they have the children's bread: but from the overflowings of their full table, there may be a few crumbs of mercy for a poor Gentile mother:

* "It was a saying of the Jews, that the nations of the Gentiles were only to be compared to dogs: while they (the Jews) were the children of God."—*Lightfoot*. The word in the passage means "curs," or "whelps." The reply which the woman made alludes to an eastern custom after meals. Using no knife or fork, the easterns take their food with their fingers, which, when they have done, they sometimes wipe on a piece of bread, and throw it to the dogs, which may be waiting near them.

the healing of my afflicted daughter will not diminish their store; it is only as a crumb to their feast. And, though I am only as a dog, it is the privilege of dogs to share the kindness of their master: then refuse not my prayer; speak but one word, give this one display of thy almighty power, and send me to my home rejoicing in thy compassion."

The love of the Saviour's heart now broke forth: he no longer restrained his admiration of her faith; "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" let thy own faith be the measure of the blessing thou seekest; "the devil is gone out of thy daughter." She doubted not his word, nor asked for a sign that her desire was granted; but again showed the strength of that grace which had just received the approval of the Saviour, and without delay departed to her home in the confidence that her daughter was well. She arrives at the door of her dwelling, enters without hesitation, and beholds her child lying on the bed, completely freed from the power of the wicked spirit.

The conduct of this heathen mother claims not only our admiration, but our imitation. Observe,
1. Her maternal love. "Have mercy on me," and yet the blessing was for her daughter. Whether we are son, daughter, parent, or friend, we should fervently pray for the salvation of those we love. What joy would it afford us, if we could deliver our friends, our sick and dying friends, from a dangerous disease! Should we, then, be less concerned to save their souls from the power of Satan, and from eternal death?

2. Her perseverance in prayer. Our Lord once

related a parable to enforce this lesson, "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint," Luke xviii. 1—8: the same truth is taught by this miracle. He will certainly answer prayer, though he may for a time delay.

3. Her humility. She pleaded no merit; but cried for mercy, even the crumbs of mercy, as a free gift, and to which she had no claim. All are sinners; and as such, are not worthy of the least of the mercies which God bestows.

4. Her faith. She had not one promise, not one invitation, not a single precedent or example; and yet she came to Christ, in the confidence that his mercy was not confined to the Jews, and that he was the Saviour and Friend of all mankind. She had faith in him as able to cast out Satan, to heal her child at a distance, and by a word. And further, she relied fully on the word of promise which Christ gave to her, and believed her child was restored, because He had said so. Let us then be willing to learn from this Gentile mother what true faith is—that it is an earnest desire for the blessings which the Saviour is able and willing to give; a sincere and humble application to him for them; and a cheerful reliance on the word of promise which he has spoken: "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," John vi. 47.





TYRE.

CHAPTER X.

Why Jesus travelled from place to place—Physicians in the east—Decapolis—Deaf and dumb man cured—How Christ may be imitated—Many miracles on a mountain—The maimed—Four thousand fed—Bethsaida—Blind man restored—Spiritual sight—Cesarea Philippi—Boy possessed of a devil—Faith in miracles—The young hindered from coming to Christ.

IN the times of ancient Greece and Rome, "academies" were established in the principal cities, similar to our modern universities; and to these schools those resorted who were desirous of learning the systems of philosophy that prevailed. It was deemed unbecoming in a philosopher to travel about the country to teach; the learners were expected to come to the master, and not the

master to seek after the scholars. It was, however, different in the land of Judea; for though there were "schools of the prophets," in several of the towns, and other fixed schools over which their famous rabbins, as Hillel and Gamaliel, presided; yet it was not uncommon for the ancient Jewish prophets to travel from place to place, to make known their inspired messages. In our times, the art of printing diffuses over a land both human and Divine knowledge; which formerly could only be slowly and gradually spread by word of mouth.

Our Divine Redeemer accommodated himself to the usages of the country in which he was born, and journeyed from one part to another, to make known the message of grace to man. But he was not only the great Teacher; he was the great Physician. It was part of his mission to heal bodily diseases, and cast out Satan from those who were possessed: it was, therefore, necessary that he should travel through the land, that his miraculous cures might be shared by the people generally. Hence he submitted to be without a home; the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head, Matt. viii. 20. He was willing to perform long and painful journeys, that all who would, might come and obtain a free and complete recovery. Herein he showed his wisdom and his love, in humbling himself to a state of things which secured him access to the homes and hearts of the people; for in the east, no character is more esteemed, or can secure for its possessor a readier and more extensive influence in society, than that of a skilful and benevolent physician. The wonderful

cures wrought by Jesus, the certainty of obtaining them, together with the way in which they were done, without pain, without delay, and without charge, would be sure to attract numbers to him. Travellers describe the anxiety of the people of the east, in our times, to obtain the assistance of medical men who may be passing through the country.* It has also been thought, that disease was permitted to prevail to an unusual extent, when Jesus was on the earth, that his love and power might be seen in its removal.

Jesus returned from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, to the district called Decapolis, or the Ten-city district, on the eastern side of the sea of Galilee. Many in this part had been already healed by him, Matt. iv. 25, and the report of the cures had spread abroad. A large concourse of people soon assembled, and followed him to a mountain, on which he sat down, either for rest, or to instruct the people. He was now in his own country, among the lost sheep to whom he was sent; and soon many claims were made upon his compassion.

* "The news that a foreign hakeem, or doctor, was passing through the country, very soon was spread abroad; and at every halt our camp was thronged with the sick, not only of the village near to which we were encamped, but of all the surrounding villages. Many came several days' journey to consult our doctor, and were brought to him in spite of every difficulty and inconvenience; some came on asses, bolstered up with cushions, and supported by their relations; others on camels, whose rough pace must have been torture to any one in sickness. It may be conceived what a misfortune sickness must be in a country where there is no medical relief, nor even a wheeled conveyance to seek relief when it is at hand."—*Morier's Journey through Persia.*

Carne and Richardson relate the same of the parts of the east they visited; Gobat, of Abyssinia; Forbes, of Hindoostan; and Burnes, of Bokhara.

CURE OF A MAN DEAF AND DUMB.

MARK vii. 31—37.

AMONG the objects brought to Christ at this time was a deaf man, who also had an impediment in his speech; or, as the word means, he was "tongue tied," which, from the saying of the people in ver. 37, it may be supposed quite deprived him of the power of speech. He was brought by his friends, who placed him before the Saviour, with the earnest request that he would put his hands on him.

"See his friends attendant wait!
Hark, they urge the kind request!
But a mightier advocate
Dwells within the Saviour's breast:
What to him can louder cry
Than the sight of misery?
What more strong to intercede,
Than the want of power to plead?"

It is not possible always to determine the reasons of the actions of our Lord; nor is it necessary that we should know them: they were, doubtless, at all times just and wise. He commonly wrought his miracles openly, but now he took the man aside from the crowd; though it was not to avoid the scrutiny of the people, as if he were about to practise a cheat upon them. Perhaps it may have been intended, as Doddridge says, "to intimate, in a very lively manner, that we are not to pretend to enter into the reasons of his actions; and that, where we are sure that any observance whatever is appointed by him, we are humbly to submit to it, though we cannot see why it was preferred to others which we might suggest."

He could have cured the man with a word, without any outward action: instead of this, he

put his fingers into his ears, and spat, and touched his tongue, and looking up to heaven, he sighed in mental prayer to his Father, and said, in the Syriac tongue, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

“ Christ’s moving lips are by the suppliant seen,
And the last accents of the healing sentence
Ring in that ear, which never heard before.”

“ Straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”

Again, to prevent a tumult among the people, and to avoid the enmity of the pharisees, he charged the people that they should not spread the report of the miracle. He knew that many among them were intent on declaring him for their king; and he desired that his enemies should have no just ground of accusing him of seeking the public favour to forward any treasonable design. So free was he from this charge, that after the most searching scrutiny into his conduct in respect to it, his judge was forced to confess that he found no fault in him, Luke xxiii. 4. But the people were astonished beyond measure, and went forth, declaring aloud, “ He hath done all things well”— in a most perfect and gracious manner; and alluding to the prophecy of Isaiah, (xxxv. 5, 6,) they cried, “ He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.”

We may justly unite in their tribute of praise. They were laid under an express command not to declare what Jesus had done; we, on the contrary, are enjoined to show forth his praise. If he has opened our ears to listen to the words of truth, and opened our spiritually blind eyes, so that we now see, let our loosened tongues joyfully proclaim abroad his praise:

From the miracle let us learn—

1. To imitate Jesus in his readiness to do good. We cannot give speech to the dumb, nor hearing to the deaf; but there are many ways in which we may assist those who are thus afflicted; and in these duties we should be ever ready to engage. How wicked must that heart be, that can find pleasure in mocking the dumb, the deaf, the idiot, or those in any other way afflicted by the hand of God!

2. Imitate Jesus in his manner of doing good. It may have been to teach his disciples not vainly to display their works of mercy, that he took the man aside from the crowd; and our efforts to benefit our fellow creatures should always be marked by tenderness, prudence, and humility—this will be to do good as Christ did it.

VARIOUS MIRACLES NEAR THE SEA OF GALILEE.

MATT. xv. 29—31.

JESUS was still on the mount, and the people continued to flock to him for instruction. Small parties were probably seen making their way along the shores of the lake, while others were crossing the adjoining plain, or winding up the steep of the mountain: some guided by the hand of friendship, and others slowly groping their way to the spot. At length, they all met in the place where Jesus was seated, when the sick were laid at his feet, that they might catch the glance of his eye, and move his heart to pity. There lay the lame, the infirm, the bed-ridden, and the dying, extended on their couches; and there stood the blind, the dumb, the maimed, and the palsied. What an assemblage of human woe! A scene like this would move any heart to compassion:

how much more, then, were the tender feelings of Jesus affected at the sight! He gazed for an instant with a look of unspeakable benevolence, and then, with almighty power, gave health and strength to all.

“ Who can describe the sentiments of these happy creatures, who, without any dangerous or painful operation, found themselves, in a moment, restored beyond all the efforts of nature, and beyond all the prospects of hope! With what pleasure did the ear which had just been opened, listen to the pleasing accents of his instructive tongue! How did the lame leap around him for joy! and the maimed * extend their recovered hands in grateful acknowledgments of his new-creating power! While the voice of the dumb sang forth his praises in sounds before unknown; and the eye of the blind checked the curiosity which would have prompted it to range over the unveiled beauties of nature, to fix its rapturous regards on the gracious countenance of Him, who had given it the day!” †

FOUR THOUSAND FED.

MATT. xv. 32—39; MARK viii. 1—9.

It was no common attraction that now bound the people to Jesus. Not only were they charmed

* The original word which in our version is rendered “ maimed,” strictly means, one whose hand or arm has been *cut* off, or the absolute loss of a limb; though it may sometimes only signify lameness in the feet. It is reasonable to suppose, that among the many maimed who were brought to our Saviour, there were some who had totally lost their limbs. In this view scarcely any of his miracles are more wonderful. What should we think of a person who could restore a lost limb or member? It is an act of creation—the work of God, and beyond all human power. Perhaps we are not always sensible of the full import of this word, when reading the miraculous cures performed by our Lord.—*Grotius, Calmet, Doddridge.*

† *Doddridge.*

by the words that flowed from his lips, but numbers, under the influence of the first joyous feelings of restored health, were unwilling to leave their kind Benefactor. The throng largely increased; and instead of returning to their homes, they remained for three days and two nights in the open fields. It was a dry and pleasant season of the year, when this could be done without injury; and especially as the inhabitants of Judea were accustomed to sleep on the flat roofs of their houses during the months of summer, for the sake of coolness.

What an interesting scene, we may imagine, was presented at midnight on this spot! The moon is gliding through the sky; the stars shine with a brightness unknown to northern countries; and the night air blows pleasantly after the heat of the day. Along the desert, arbours made of boughs of trees and rushes, have been hastily formed, and beneath these green tabernacles the busy multitude are at rest. Here and there a fire is still seen faintly burning; and by the side, a few more hardy than the rest have laid themselves along. The disciples have also sought repose; and now all is calm and still. In the silence of the midnight hour, the Saviour seeks to the mountain top, for prayer, while all around him sleep.

The close of the third day arrived, and whatever provision they had brought, or could obtain in the wilderness, was exhausted, and they had now nothing to eat. Jesus, who knew their wants, and at all times showed a tender care for the comfort of his followers resolved once more to feed them by miracle. An objection was again made by the disciples. The provision was greater, and the number of guests was less, and yet they

were "slow of heart to believe" that the multitude could be supplied in the wilderness. Had they forgotten what they had so lately seen? or did they doubt that it could be repeated? Did they not know that his creative energy could make even one loaf suffice to feed the throng? But he kindly bore with their weakness of faith, and soon convinced them that all things were entirely under his control.

Again they were sent among the people, to learn what provision could be found, and again the scanty supply was brought to Jesus; the people were ranged in ranks, solemn thanks were offered to the Father of all mercies; the blessing was given, the bread was broken.* The disciples bore the supplies to the astonished guests, they ate, and were satisfied; and, at the conclusion of the feast, the fragments were collected at the command of our Lord. Having given this new proof of his compassion for their wants, and of his ability to help them, he took ship, and went into the country lying between the towns of Magdala and Dalmanutha.

The multitude had listened to the Divine instruction, and witnessed the unlimited power of the Saviour: what good impression was made on their hearts is unknown. It is to be feared, that the greater portion were under the influence of carnal feelings; and, as in the former case, when

* "We never read in the Bible of *cutting* of bread with a knife; nor is this now done in the east. Bread was, and is, always broken. The bread being baked in small cakes, or in broad and thin ones, not in large dense loaves, is easily broken into such portions as may be required. Bread was always broken by the master of the family, or feast; and was the chief article of food."—*Kitto*.

they found that his kingdom was not of this world, they soon gave up all thought of becoming his followers. To have been with Christ for a few days on earth, was a great honour: how awful will be the contrast to be shut out from his presence for ever! Let it never be forgotten, that neglected privileges will add to the anguish of the eternal world of misery.

A BLIND MAN RESTORED.

MARK viii. 22—26.

SHORTLY after feeding the four thousand, Jesus again visited Bethsaida, where his former miracles were well known. On his arrival in the town, a blind man was led to him by the hand. He had already warned the inhabitants of this city of approaching woe, because they heeded not the things that had been done in their midst. Though justly angry with the people, he was still ready to welcome all who came to him in faith. He took the blind man by the hand, and led him to the outside of the town, as though it were unworthy of another miracle being wrought in its streets. He knew that the unbelief of the inhabitants would lead them again to reject him, and thus their guilt would be increased. Guiding the man by the hand till they had passed the city gates, he came to a spot where, in a private manner, he restored him to sight. He first spat on his eyes, then laid his hands on him, and asked if he saw anything. "I see men as trees, walking," was the reply. As his sight came to him gradually, in the dimness of opening vision he took men to be trees; and, in his confusion, said the trees were walking. It was probably near the road side

where they now stood, and persons might have been passing at the time.

Jesus then completed the cure; he laid his hand on the half-opened eyes, and told the man a second time to look up; when every object stood distinctly and clearly to his view. The work of mercy done, our Lord passed from the city of Bethsaida, and the man went on his way, rejoicing in the invaluable blessing which he now enjoyed.

“ Oh! methinks I hear him praising,
 Publishing to all around,
 ‘ Friends, is not my case amazing?
 What a Saviour I have found!
 Oh that all the blind but knew him,
 And would be advised by me;
 Surely they would hasten to him,
 He would cause them all to see!’ ”

This miracle, though similar to others in some respects, is peculiar in the gradual manner in which it was done. It was not for want of power that it was not perfected at once; our Lord could have perfectly healed at the first touch, or without laying a finger upon him: yet he was pleased so to act, and, as it has been before remarked, it is not for us to know the reason of his conduct in every case. It becomes us humbly to accept what the Lord is pleased to make known of his ways and works, and when they are mysterious to us, still to believe that they are all wise and good. The world, and all it contains, might have been created by him in one day, and yet six days were employed in bringing it into being: the flowers, trees, and fruits of the earth, might spring up without the slow process through which they now pass; but he has ordained it should be otherwise. It is enough for us to know that He is

“wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,” Isa. xxviii. 19.

1. The restoring of the blind man to sight may illustrate the way in which the light of truth breaks on the mind. When the heart is changed by the grace of God, it is by slow degrees that it advances in knowledge and faith. Yet if we continue to look to Jesus, in believing prayer, he will bring us out of obscurity, and perfect the work in us. “Now we see through a glass, darkly;” in heaven we shall “see face to face,” 1 Cor. xiii. 12 : there all will be bright and beautiful.

2. If we continue to slight the favours of Christ, we shall for ever forfeit them. The Lord may give us up to our own ways, and then we are for ever undone, like the people of Bethsaida.

BOY, POSSESSED OF A DEVIL, RESTORED.

MATT. xvii. 14—21 ; MARK ix. 14—29 ; LUKE ix. 37—42.

FROM Bethsaida our Lord went into the country near Cesarea Philippi, a town about thirty miles to the north of the sea of Galilee, near the range of mountains called Anti-Lebanon. About six days afterwards, he ascended a mountain with three of his disciples, for prayer and retirement. The site of this mountain is not named, but it was probably near the above city.* While he prayed,

* Mount Tabor, near Nazareth, is commonly said to be the scene of the transfiguration ; but Lightfoot, Reland, and various travellers, consider that the mountain is rather to be sought for somewhere not far from Cesarea Philippi, where there are several high and retired mountains ; and that there, consequently, the miracle of casting out the devil from a youth was wrought. Dr. Robinson, also, in his recent “*Researches in Palestine*,” has proved that the summit of Mount Tabor was occupied by a fortified city long before and after the event of the transfiguration, and that it was not until the fourth century that this spot was fixed upon as the supposed site.

his countenance shone like the brightness of the mid-day sun, his whole body was surrounded with unearthly splendour, and his clothing was white as snow, and sparkling with rays of heavenly light. From this place, where a few beams of his own Divine glory broke forth, he descended to the plain, still further to be familiar with the sorrows of sinful men.

During his short absence, the multitude had much increased, and were anxiously waiting at the foot of the mount for his coming down. When they beheld him, they were "greatly amazed," probably at the lustre which still appeared about his person, like as when Moses descended from Mount Sinai, the skin of whose face shone, Exod. xxxiv. 29—31. As he drew nigh, he saw several of his disciples surrounded by a throng of people, while the scribes were busily engaged in questioning them. Whether they were taunting them on the absence of their Master; or were triumphing over the disciples at their inability to cast out a devil, we are not informed. Jesus, asked, "What question ye with them?" when a man of the multitude came and knelt down, and implored his aid on behalf of his child: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit. O Lord, I beseech thee look upon him, for he is my only child." This appeal at once drew the attention of our Saviour towards him. The father went on to relate his tale of sorrow. His son was a lunatic, in the bloom of youth deprived of reason; and instead of being a comfort to his parents, was a continual cause of care and distress. Alarming fits often seized him, and so suddenly, that sometimes he fell into the

fire, and at other times into the water, so that his life was always in danger. Nor at any intervals of reason could he pour his sorrows into the ears of his parents, or hold affectionate communication with them, which might have given a few moments of gladness amidst days of misery; for, alas! he was deaf and dumb. And what was worse than all, he was possessed by an evil spirit, who, acting on the disease, grievously increased his sufferings.

The poor maniac boy had no power to contend with his fierce tormentor. At times, he was seized by the spirit, and his dumbness would give way, when frightful shrieks were heard, and then desperately falling on the ground, his body was convulsed; where, foaming at the mouth, and gnashing with his teeth, he lay, until exhausted with his struggles, he appeared as though he were dead. Nor was this a recent affliction; from the years of childhood he had been in this unhappy state. His strength was now nearly gone, and his parents beheld their only child in a state of hopeless misery, beyond all human help.

The father went on to tell how he had brought the child to the disciples, but they could not heal him. "I had heard of thy power, and came with some faint hope that thou mightest perchance restore my poor boy, or at least, alleviate his affliction. I have tried thy disciples in vain; and now, if thou canst do anything, hear the prayers of a parent pleading for his child, and have compassion on us both, by healing him. Lord, have mercy on my son!"

Was it possible that such an appeal could fail of success? Our Lord was moved with pity towards

the afflicted child, but first he saw that it was needful to rebuke the unbelief and weakness of faith of those around him. "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" It is uncertain to whom these words were spoken. Were they addressed to the scribes? then they were intended to rebuke them for their artful designs to draw the people away, and their ill-natured joy at the disciples being foiled in casting out the spirit. If to the father, they chided his want of confidence in Christ's ability to restore his child. Or were they to reprove the weakness of the disciples' faith? He was not displeased with their attempt, he had already given them power against unclean spirits, Matt. x. 8; but it was as though their hearts failed them, and they doubted the word of their Master. How unfit were they for the great work to which they were soon to be sent, if they thought their Lord would not fulfil his own word in them!

"Bring thy son hither to me." In a moment they placed the afflicted youth before him; but at the sight of Jesus he was thrown by the demon with violence on the ground, where he lay convulsed, tearing himself, and foaming at the mouth. The unclean spirit dreaded the power of Christ: he would destroy the life of his prey, sooner than be disgraced by being cast out, and that Jesus should have the honour of another miracle.

The youth lay in the midst of the alarmed multitude, in dreadful agonies. Our Saviour asked how long he had been afflicted, and was told, 'Even from a child.' The distressed father, between hope and fear, again pressed him to have

compassion, and heal his son. "If thou canst believe," was the answer; "all things are possible to him that believeth." Do not doubt my ability; though my disciples have failed, I have the power, if thou hast faith to receive the blessing.—It touched the father to the heart, lest his child should lose the cure through his want of faith; and, with tears, he cried, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." This remarkable reply proved that he had faith to look to Christ, not only as able to cure his child, but as able to work in him an increase of faith; he prayed to him as the Author of faith, and therefore as a Divine Being. It was enough; the command was given, "Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I charge thee, come out of him:" not only cease from thy present rage and tormenting, entirely and for ever abandon thy prey; "come out of him." With a last struggle, the malignant demon fiercely tore him, as he departed, and left him in so exhausted a state, that the people cried out with fear, "He is dead!" Jesus now stooped, took him by the hand, graciously raised him on his feet, and to the surprise of all he was found perfectly cured. No longer a poor lunatic, deprived of speech and hearing, and a victim to Satan's malice, but now in his right mind, freed from torturing fits, delivered from the tyranny of evil spirits, his ears listening to the Saviour's voice, and his tongue speaking his praise. The father with joy received his son, the people stood amazed, and Jesus meekly retired into a house where he at that time dwelt.

1. The faith referred to in this narrative, relates to the doing and working of miracles. The disciples failed in casting out Satan, because they

were weak in this grace ; there was much of unbelief in their hearts : our Lord told them this, when they afterwards asked why they were not able to do it, Matt. xvii. 20 : also, on the strength of the father's belief in Jesus, the restoring of his son appeared to depend. Miracles have ceased, and this particular kind of faith has ceased also ; yet are we now called to believe in Christ, " with our heart," as the only Mediator between God and man, as able to save us from our sins. If we feel this grace to be weak in our hearts, let us use the prayer of the anxious father, " Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Give me more of that faith which purifies the heart, overcomes the world, works righteousness, and which will strengthen me to run with patience the race that is set before me.

2. If Satan opposed a youth who was brought to Christ to obtain a bodily cure, how much more will he strive to prevent the young from seeking the salvation of their souls ! When they begin to turn to the Saviour, and first cry for his help, then the wretched spirit would cast them down ; deprive them, if he could, of reason, speech, and hearing, and rather that they should die than be delivered from his power. But the eye of Jesus is on all who truly seek him ; and though he may permit Satan to alarm and distress them, he will, at length, rescue them from his power ; and when brought safely to heaven, they shall be for ever free from all the assaults and temptations of the evil spirit.



POOL OF SILOAM.

CHAPTER XI.

Self-denial of the Saviour—Capernaum—Miracle to pay the tribute money—Contentment, justice, and forbearance—Sight given to a man born blind—Pool of Siloam—Rage of the Jews—Infidelity of the pharisees—Faith proved by obedience—Not ashamed of Christ—Galilee—Deformed woman restored—Gratitude and submission—Dropsical man healed—Samaria—Ten lepers healed—Grateful Samaritan—The prayer of the lepers.

SELF-DENIAL is always connected with sincere love. Where, however, shall we find so illustrious an instance as in our Lord Jesus Christ? “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation; and took upon him the form of a servant

and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 7, 8. He came to serve: he was the servant of his Father; and the servant of man. In this character he gave himself wholly to his work; not his leisure only, or at uncertain intervals; but his nights and days—his whole life. In the midst of weariness and sorrow, he never lost sight of it: his own ease and comfort were never consulted when they stood in the way.

Sometimes he travelled a long journey as though on purpose to serve one object of misery, as may be seen in the case of the daughter of the woman of Canaan. Though so ready to work miracles for others, we do not read of his putting forth his almighty power to serve himself. The only approach to this was when he wrought a miracle to pay the tribute money; and even then we are taught how poor he was for our sakes.

MIRACLE TO PAY THE TRIBUTE MONEY.

MATT. xvii. 24—27.

ON entering the city of Capernaum, our Lord went into a house—probably Peter's, who resided in the town, though it was nothing more than a poor fisherman's habitation. While there, the collectors of the tribute money came, and asked Peter, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" He knew that his Lord had taught his followers to give to all their dues: to Cesar, the things that were Cesar's; and to God, the things that were God's; and to the inquiry promptly answered, "Yes." This tribute was the payment of a coin called didrachma, (or two drachms, or half-shekel,

equal to about eighteen pence of our money.) In the time of our Lord it was paid annually by all persons above twenty years of age, and was spent in the purchase of sacrifices for the daily service, incense, salt, flour, and other articles used in the Jewish sanctuary. It was called, "the ransom money, an atonement for their souls;" and was an acknowledgment that all were alike sinners, and needed to be ransomed: not that they were to understand that they were "purchased with corruptible things, as with silver and gold;" but the money being used in the purchase of the lambs that were offered, it directed the thoughts to the truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." This sum was paid alike by rich and poor, to intimate that their souls were of equal value in the sight of God. Some, however, suppose it was another tribute.

The apostle Peter returned into the house, when Jesus, who though not present at the conversation with the collector, yet perfectly knew what had taken place, "prevented him," or anticipated what he was about to say. Peter had not long before been in the mount with his Lord, and had seen his glory, and now might be disposed to think that his Master should be exempt from the tax, when his Lord thus addressed him: "What thinkest thou Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom, or tribute? of their children, or of strangers?" Kings of the earth do not tax their own sons, but their subjects, and foreigners who trade with them; and as I am the Son of God, I may claim to be free. As the money is levied for the temple, of which I am the Lord, it is not for me to pay for its support.

The disciple replied to his Master's question, "Of strangers." "Then are the children free," said our Lord; and with his usual gentleness and meekness, he added to this effect—Nevertheless, lest they should charge me with despising the holy place and its services, go thou to the adjoining lake, and cast in your hook, take up the fish that first cometh up; and upon opening its mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money, which will be enough to pay for you and me; and by that instance of my power you will further learn my dominion over all creatures.

Strange as this order must have appeared, Peter had seen enough of his Lord's power, not to hesitate in obeying. He went, caught the fish, found in it a stater, a coin equal to about three shillings of our money, and with it paid the tribute.

How strikingly this miracle shows us the knowledge and power of our Lord Jesus! Though he was sitting in Peter's house, at some distance from the sea, he knew among the millions of fish that were in the waters, there was one that had swallowed a piece of silver; he knew how much that piece of silver was worth; and then, by his power, he brought, from among the immense multitude, that same fish to Peter's hook.

1. This incident may teach us contentment in a humble station of life. Jesus was poor, though he could have brought up all the vast treasure that had been sunk in the sea, as easily as he raised the stater out of the deep. He could have enriched his disciples with all the pearls in the ocean; but he knew riches would be a snare to them; and he had better treasure to give, which was laid up for them in heaven.

2. "Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour," Rom. xiii. 7.

3. Avoid giving offence. See the gentleness and meekness of our Lord, who was careful not to offend others; and let your parents, brothers, sisters, all who know you, bear this evidence that you have learned of Him who was meek and lowly of heart.

SIGHT GIVEN TO A MAN BORN BLIND.

JOHN ix. 1—41.

JESUS now went up to Jerusalem. The people were crowding along the streets on their way to the temple. It was not only the sabbath-day, but was also the feast of dedication—a festival regarded by the Jews with much honour, as commemorating the purifying of the holy place after it had been profaned by the heathen king of Syria.

The sacred psalms were sung in the temple, and the preparations had been timely made to illuminate the city at night, as was customary at this festival. On the way to his Father's courts, our Lord saw a blind man sitting by the wayside, asking alms of those who were passing to the feast. He never looked on the blind without his heart being moved to compassion; and this was a case of peculiar affliction. Some are blind by disease; some by accident; but this man was born blind. From infancy to youth, from youth to manhood, he had grown up in entire darkness. He had never seen his mother's eye, weeping tears of sorrow over her poor blind child; nor had he ever beheld his father's hand stretched out to

sustain his helpless boy. The sun, moon, stars, the fields, the flowers, were all a blank to him.

“ His parents, brothers, neighbours, dealt
Their kindly care, and still were nigh;
But though the guiding hand he felt,
He never saw the sparkling eye.

“ They told him of the Almighty’s word
Recorded in the sacred law;
Listening, the sacred truth he heard,
But the loved record never saw.

“ Alike the sun’s meridian light,
The morning’s dawn, the evening’s fall,
Were gloom to his unconscious sight,
’Twas dark, dark, dark, and dreary all.”

The steps of Christ were arrested: he looked with pity on the blind beggar: the disciples saw he was about to heal, and interfered with a question of curiosity, rather than of charity. “ Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” Why they asked this question it is difficult to determine. Some have thought that the charge addressed to the blind man at the pool of Bethesda led to this opinion of the disciples, from which they concluded that all afflictions were the punishments of particular sins, John v. 14. Others have considered that they believed a doctrine, derived by some learned Jews from the heathen, that the souls of men were in a state of being before they were joined to bodies in this world; and that, according to their conduct in this previous state, so they passed to healthy and active bodies, or to those which were deformed and afflicted.

Christ simply declared that neither the parents, nor the man, were the cause of the blindness. It was permitted by Providence, that a work might be done which should be for the glory of God;

such were the works of mercy he was sent to do. And then further reminded them, that his time for working miracles on the bodies of men was drawing to a close.

In condescension to human weakness, our Lord proceeded to use an external action in working a cure; and showed to those around him, that the power he was about to exert was in himself, and that he was not confined to one particular mode in doing good. Spitting on the ground, he made clay with the spittle and dust of the earth; then spreading it on the eyes of the blind man, he directed him to go to the pool of Siloam, and wash. Though there was virtue neither in the clay, the spittle, or the flowing stream, it was not without a reason that he acted thus to the man. It may have been to try his faith, as Naaman was tried by the prophet, 2 Kings v. 10; or that the miracle might be more noticed by the people.

We may suppose that a crowd had now gathered around, and began questioning among themselves: "What means this clay? It is more likely to take away sight where it is possessed, than impart it where it is not!* Who ever heard that water could open the eyes of one born blind? And as to the waters of Siloam, what are they more than others?" While they are reasoning, the poor man rises on his feet, and led by the hand of a friendly guide, pursues his way through the streets of the populous city. Some turn away from him

* Some writers have supposed that this man was not only blind, but that he was destitute of the organs of sight; and that therefore clay was first placed on each vacant socket, which, by creative energy, was turned into those beautiful specimens of Divine skill, the human eyes, possessing so many curious parts, and which give the invaluable sense of sight.

in derision; others cavil, because clay and spittle had been applied to the eyes on the sabbath, contrary to their traditions; while a few, more favourably disposed, follow to see what shall be the result. With trembling heart he passes the city gates, and is guided along the eastern side of mount Zion to the pool of Siloam;* and now he slowly descends the steps, applies the water to the clay, and, in a moment, the eyes sparkle in those sockets that had been hitherto closed in utter darkness!

Oh, with what delight did he gaze for the first time on the faces of all around him! How beautiful everything looked to his new sense of sight! the trees, the flowers, the green earth, and blue sky, every object opened to him some new and strange emotion.

This wonderful event caused great curiosity and surprise among the neighbours of the man. Can it be he who sat and begged? Is it possible that the care-worn and blank look has been changed

* Siloam, or Siloa, signifies the same as Shiloh, ("the Sent;") the name which the prophets gave to the promised Messiah. This fountain breaks out of a rock on the side of mount Zion, and falls into an open and rock-hewn excavation, to which a flight of ancient stone steps descends: it is deep, and clear as crystal. Its waters are as sweet, as full, and as beautifully clear now, as in the days of our Lord. It is a luxury to sit on the grass that grows above, and look down on this celebrated water, the most useful, as well as healthful in the whole neighbourhood; and follow its rapid stream as it gushes down the side of Zion, and thence into the valley beneath, that passes into the wilderness. The fountain forms two pools: the upper called "The pool of fleeces;" the lower, or principal one, is Siloah. The stream, in its onward course, waters a few gardens of cucumbers, which are cultivated by the poor people who inhabit the village of Siloam, on the opposite side of the valley of Jehoshaphat:—*Carne's Illustrations of the Holy Land*, vol. iii.; *Stephens' Incidents of Travel in the Holy Land*.

for that cheerful countenance? How unlike him whom we used to see slowly and cautiously feeling his way along with staff in hand! Now he walks erect, and his bright eyes glance on every object around!—Observing that they stood in doubt, the man, with a flow of joy, declared, “I am he;” and, in reply to their questions, went on to tell how his eyes had been opened.

The matter was now reported to the pharisees, and the man conducted before them to be publicly examined. They were the more anxious to disprove the miracle, as giving sight to the blind was known to be one of the proofs of the Messiah; or, if they could not disprove it, they hoped to weaken its effects on the people. They began by inquiring how he had obtained his sight: either it was an accident, or owing to some natural cause. “He only put clay on my eyes, and I washed at the pool, and do see,” was the man’s answer to their crafty question; and clay and water, without the power of God, could never give sight to the blind. They then objected against the miracle, that it was done on the sabbath; and that, therefore, he who did it must be a bad man: but it occurred to other of the pharisees that God would not enable a sinner to do so great a work. Here, then, they were at a stand; when again arousing themselves, they pretended that they did not believe he was born blind. His parents were therefore sent for, and examined. The pharisees further wished it to appear, that he was not the blind beggar who used to sit by the way side. The parents asserted that he was their son, and had been blind all his life; as to the fact of the cure, they left it to their son to answer as to the

manner in which it was done. Again they tried, by artful questions, to entangle the man, but his simple and firm reasoning baffled the learned pharisees. At last, confounded and enraged, in that they could neither disprove nor suppress the miracle, they vented their spite on the man, cast him out, and deprived him of his privileges, as a Jew, of attending a synagogue.

Our Lord heard that they had expelled the man, and graciously sought him out, that he might give spiritual light to his mind, as he had already imparted natural light to his body. When he had found him, he asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man had already declared his faith in Jesus, as a prophet, openly before the pharisees: he could not disbelieve his power to work miracles; for he was a living witness to it. What then did the question mean? "Dost thou believe in the Son of God, in his Divine nature? Dost thou believe that I am He?" "Lord, I believe," he exclaimed; and as a proof of his faith, he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

1. It has been said, that in the two characters—the pharisees, and the blind beggar—we have examples of the infidel and the believer, which will hold true to the end of the world. Where the temper of the pharisee is, there will Christ be unknown or rejected: where the faith and obedience of the blind man are found, there will Christ be accepted and loved.

2. Faith is proved by obedience. If pride or prejudice had led the man to refuse to go to Siloam, or had he delayed, Jesus would have passed on his way to do good to others, and his blindness would have remained for life. How instructive

is this to us ! We are all spiritually blind ; Christ can give us light : he now calls on us to accept his mercy : if we hesitate, or reject the means he has appointed to enlighten our minds, the blessings of salvation will be lost for ever.

3. Let us not be ashamed to own Jesus before wicked men. “ If any be ashamed of me, and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father.”

DEFORMED WOMAN RESTORED.

LUKE xiii. 10—17.

AFTER the feast, our Lord went a journey into Galilee. There is every reason to conclude, that he paid strict regard to the holy days and festivals among the Jews : certainly, all those that were appointed by his Father. He was truly a Jew, for “ He took upon him the seed of Abraham,” and was “ made under the law.” Frequent reference is made to his attending the services of the synagogue on the sabbath days : these services consisted of prayers, reading the Scriptures, and preaching, or expounding the law.

During this journey, Jesus went into a synagogue in one of the cities, and it was the sabbath day. He stood up to teach. Among those gathered around, listening to his words, was a poor woman ; she was unable to stand erect, being crooked backed, and her body bowed forward in a painful posture. In this condition she had continued for eighteen years, and, in all probability, was a burden to herself and others. It is said she had a “ spirit of infirmity ;” her affliction was either caused by Satan, or he took advantage of her weakness to add severely to her sorrows.

May we not hope that she was one of those who loved the habitation of God's house, and who found relief in her afflictions by attending his sacred service? Neither her poverty, nor the pain of walking in her weak state, nor the shame of her deformity, could keep her from the courts of the Lord. She had often gone up to the synagogue, and returned to her home, pressed down with her infirmity. But now Jesus looked on her: he needed not that any should tell him what was in her heart; he knew all the sad circumstances of her case; and, without asking a question, he said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." As he spoke, he laid his hands on her, and she stood erect before them all, in the vigour of health, and free from the oppressions of Satan. Full of joy and gratitude, she broke forth in devout praise to God for her instant and wonderful cure.

The ruler of the synagogue was standing by, and with a pretended zeal for the sanctity of the sabbath, and the honour of religion, he loudly expressed his displeasure. Yet fearing to address Christ, he turned sternly to the people, and charged them with encouraging breaches of the holy day. Why do you not bring your sick to be healed on the other days of the week? Jesus saw that, under this disguise, there were the workings of an envious and unfeeling heart, and severely rebuked him, as he had done the pharisees on similar occasions. "You not only regard it as lawful to feed your oxen and beasts of burden on the sabbath, you loose them from the stall, and lead them to water; yet, when a fellow creature, one of your own nation and religion, who

has been under Satan's bondage for eighteen years, is loosed from her affliction, then you cavil and oppose!" As the water was commonly procured from wells, it was necessarily servile and laborious: they were willing, however, to attend to this, when their own interests were concerned. The opposers were silenced, and put to shame; though, it is to be feared, enmity still rankled in their hearts.

From the envious pharisees, turn to the poor woman. Oh memorable day in her history! Never could she have forgotten the kind looks and words of Him who spake her recovery and freedom. As she entered the doors of her house, could she fail exclaiming, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's?" Psa. ciii. 1—5. I went out of these doors a poor infirm creature, who could scarcely look up to heaven; bowed down by disease, and under Satan's heavy yoke; and now I return, walking upright, in the full enjoyment of health. Little did I think when I awoke this morning, that this would be the day of my deliverance! Who could have thought, when I entered the house of God, that I should meet with One who, with a word, would speak my recovery!

1. Can we look back to uninterrupted years of health and activity? What cause for thankfulness! Many have been laid on sick beds, and "wearisome months have been appointed them," whilst we have been moving about the world, enjoying the mercies of the God of providence.

2. Have we seen others recover, whilst we still continue in affliction? Let us bear the burden that is laid on us, with humble submission and cheerful hope. Should our troubles continue to the end of life, if we are true believers in the Saviour, it will at last be found, that "our light afflictions," which were for a moment, have worked for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

3. How many who have been bowed down by Satan's yoke, for more than eighteen years, have found deliverance in the house of God!

DROPSICAL MAN HEALED.

LUKE xiv. 1—6.

ABOUT this time, our Lord was invited to the house of one of the chief pharisees, to eat bread—this was a common expression for taking a meal—and it was the sabbath day. Though this sect were so rigorous in their observance of the traditions respecting this day, they thought they did honour to it by keeping it as a festival, and preparing the choicest food for the occasion. It may be hoped that this pharisee was more favourably disposed to Christ than others of his party, and had sought his society with a good intention. Jesus accepted the invitation, not for the sake of the feast, but that he might do good to those who were present. Among those invited were other pharisees, who watched his words and conduct, in the hope of finding grounds of accusation against him; possibly supposing that, during the free intercourse of the table, he would not be on his guard. To eat bread with a man was regarded as a sincere pledge of friendship; but these persons, though they reclined at table with him, were

intent either to reproach his character, or take away his life. They little thought that their inmost hearts were open to his view.

Among those present was a man afflicted with the dropsy—an accumulation of water in different parts of the body, a disease alike dangerous and painful. He may have been brought in by the designing pharisees, to see whether or not Jesus would heal him on the sabbath. Their usual objection was anticipated by a question: "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" There was one simple reply which they might have given, but this would have been contrary to their traditions, and would have condemned their own conduct. Besides, they had been so often put to silence before the people, that, at this time, they feared to encounter his arguments and rebukes.

Observing that they were silent, Jesus took hold of the man, healed him, and dismissed him from the assembly; perhaps, lest they should visit him with their malice, as they had lately done to the man born blind, at Jerusalem. Again turning to those who were at the table, he inquired, If a man had an ass or an ox, fall into a pit, on the sabbath day, would he not pull it out? They remained silent. Christ then added, that it was far more important to cure a man, whose life was so much more valuable.

May we learn from the example of our Lord, to persevere in the way of duty, though we may meet with opposition and scorn. Daniel, and his companions, in Babylon; Elijah among his own countrymen; and the apostle Paul in his labours were thus severely tried. Opposition is permitted among other reasons, that we may show meekness

charity, and forgiveness. "So is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1 Peter ii. 15.

TEN LEPERS HEALED.

LUKE xvii. 11—19.

CHRIST was now on his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, and "he must needs go through Samaria," John iv. 4, which lay in the direct line of road. As he drew nigh to a Samaritan village, the people refused to receive him, because he was a Jew, and was on his way to the temple at Jerusalem. Jesus meekly passed on to another village, where an occasion was presented of teaching the disciples not to resent the affronts they should meet with in the world, but to return good for evil.

As he entered the village, ten lepers stood at a distance from the public way, lest they should touch any passenger, and render him unclean.*

* "This was in or near a village, and lepers were not excluded from villages, and from those country towns, which were un-walled in the time of Joshua."—*Lightfoot*. They were, however, expected to keep at a distance from all persons they met. A leper, who transgressed the rules, by intruding into places forbidden him, was punished by being flogged with forty stripes, save one. As the disease passed from father to son, whole families were often afflicted with it, who lived together in secluded parts of the country. "Near the foot of a hill, in Cyprus, in a most lonely spot, and in a wretched cottage, lived a family of lepers. These unfortunate people were avoided by all the other inhabitants, who dreaded to come near their dwelling. The disease was hereditary, for every one of their numerous family was afflicted with it. Some of them stood at the door, and looked the pictures of sadness and solitude. They would be starved, did not some of the people who live in the plain, bring food occasionally, and place it at a short distance from the cottage. So great is the horror entertained of this disease, that the Mosaic law is fulfilled to the letter, of shutting them out from all society, without the hope of ever returning to it."—*Carne's Letters from the East*. See also page 47.

They had heard of his approach, and now ranged themselves on the road side, where they might catch his eye; and, by a display of their misery, move his heart to help them. He drew nigh, and they began their mournful wail: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Had he been mindful of the insults that had been just offered to him in this part of the country, he would have passed on, without attending to their cry; but looking at the poor objects, he pitied them, and said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." A feeling of disappointment, that they were not at once restored, must have been felt by them. "How are we to understand this direction to go to the priests, while our leprosy is full upon us? Have they power or authority to heal? He has not given us one word of promise, nor told us what he intends to do. All his reply to our earnest request, has been, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.'" But onward they went, as though they were already well: they had a strong faith, that the command he had laid upon them, was an earnest of their request. "Surely he would not have raised our expectations, if he had not designed to restore us? One so compassionate, as we have heard he is, would never trifle with our deep misery; nor send us to the priests only to mock our hope. He can reach us with a cure when at a distance, as well as nigh at hand." Thus, we may suppose, they reasoned among themselves, as they made their way along the road.

"And as they went, they were cleansed." How soon this took place, we cannot tell; probably, they had not gone far, before they felt an unusual and delightful sensation in their bodies which proved

that they were restored to health. As they looked at each other, they mutually beheld, with surprise, the ghastly hue of their flesh, and the unsightly glare of their eyes, change for the bloom and freshness of health. Not one, or a part—all share the happy deliverance.

It would have been well if, amid their joy, they had thought of Him who had healed them. One only returned to glorify God, and to thank his Deliverer. The other nine went their way to the temple, and in a formal way returned thanks, as many do after recovery from affliction: but where were the feelings of gratitude which are acceptable to God? After being pronounced clean by the priests, they hastened to their homes, forgetful of what was due to Christ.

“ Just emblems of the human race,
All debtors to Almighty grace,
How few with thankful hearts believe,
And own the blessings they receive !”

The grateful leper is expressly noted as being a Samaritan, from which it may be supposed the rest were Jews. Now restored, he might venture near the Saviour: he cast himself humbly at his feet, and, with a loud voice, glorified God, devoutly giving thanks to Jesus for cleansing him of the foul disease.

As though affected with this instance of gratitude, contrasted with the conduct of the others, our Saviour said, “ Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?” One who, it might be supposed, had the least sense of piety, and from whom less was expected, has shown the most just sense of the mercy he has received. Then addressing the prostrate man—“ Arise, go thy way.

thy faith hath made thee whole." May we not hope that now he had faith in Jesus as the Messiah; and not only was delivered from his bodily disease, but found salvation for his soul?

1. Let us seek to Christ to be healed of the leprosy of sin; the prayer of the ten lepers will be found suited to our case. They felt their misery, and stood at a humble distance, as too polluted to draw nigh. As sin is the abominable thing which God hates, and has made us vile in his sight, it becomes us to approach before him under a deep sense of our pollution. They cried for mercy; they pleaded not merit. They prayed with fervour, lifting up their voices aloud. Their case was urgent; they might never meet with Christ again. It was the prayer of faith, and such prayer he always answers, James i. 6.

2. Let the conduct of the Samaritan furnish us an example of gratitude. The ten were alike diseased, presented the same prayer, were equally anxious to be restored; but how far were they from being equally affected with their deliverance! But before we censure the nine, for their ingratitude for their *one* mercy, we may ask ourselves, How many are the mercies we daily receive, without rendering to God according to the benefits done to us? We are all verily guilty of the sin of ingratitude.





CHAPTER XII.

Bethany—Sickness and death of Lazarus—Jesus weeping—Mourning for the dead—Lazarus raised—Lessons—Jericho—Two blind beggars restored to sight—Bartimeus—The Saviour's question—Christ enters Jerusalem—Buyers and sellers again driven out of the temple—Many miracles.

LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

JOHN xi. 1—46.

THE miracle which appears the most striking, and which has been narrated at greatest length, is the raising of Lazarus from the dead. It is recorded only by St. John, who wrote shortly after the second death of Lazarus: the other evangelists, it is thought, omitted the account, as he was alive

when they wrote. The Jews had already shown their hatred of the "friend of Jesus," and plotted to destroy him, John xii. 10; it was, therefore, probably not inserted in the earlier Gospels, lest their wrath should be further awakened against him. It has also been observed, that the first three evangelists confine themselves principally to what Christ did in Galilee; while John gives chiefly what took place in and about Jerusalem. "It is more largely recorded than any other of Christ's miracles," says Matthew Henry, "not only because there are so many circumstances in it so very instructive, and the miracle itself is so very great a proof of his mission, but because it was an earnest of that which was to be the crowning proof of all—Christ's own resurrection."

Lazarus appears to have lived with his two sisters, Martha and Mary, of whom an interesting notice is found in Luke x. 38—42. They were evidently persons of property, and of good repute among their countrymen; and were doubtless pious, or the holy Saviour would not so often have made their house his home. Indeed, of them all the Scripture gives this delightful testimony: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." They resided in the pleasant village of Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, where many of the rich Jews had country houses; attracted to the place by its healthy situation, and verdant plains covered with trees and long grass.*

* It is now described by travellers as a miserable, desolate village; a fourth part of the houses lying in ruins, and the rest inhabited by a few poor Arab families, engaged in agriculture. "It was on one of the last days of our stay at Jerusalem, that mounting the spirited mules we had engaged for our journey northwards, we rode out to Bethany. On an eastern slope,

Closely united in affection and piety, raised above want in their circumstances, and honoured by the peculiar friendship of Christ, this family circle could not be otherwise than happy. Yet they were not free from disease and death. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;" though it is with the gracious design that they may be "partakers of his holiness." Our love to Christ, and his love to us, will not exempt us from sorrow. It is enough for the disciples if they be as their Master. Lazarus fell sick. His sisters doubtless used the best means they could obtain, in the fond hope of his recovery; and all that care and affection could do, was done: but he continued rapidly to get worse, filling their hearts with alarm. What shall they do? to whom can they apply? They think of Him who was pleased to own them as his friends. He had done so many works of mercy for others; surely he would not deny *them*, when they ask for their brother!

Their message was simple and modest: "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick." They do

(strictly of the Mount of Olives,) in a shallow wady, (valley,) lies the village. We reached it in three quarters of an hour: this gives a distance of a little less than two Roman miles from the eastern part of the city, corresponding well to the fifteen furlongs of the evangelist, John xi. 18. It is a poor village of some twenty families: its inhabitants are without thrift or industry. The monks who reside here, as a matter of course, show the house of Martha and Mary, that of Simon the leper, and the sepulchre of Lazarus. The latter is a deep vault, like a cellar cut in a limestone rock, in the middle of the village, to which there is a descent of twenty-six steps. It is hardly necessary to remark, that there is not the slightest probability of its having been the tomb of Lazarus. The form is not that of the ancient sepulchres; nor does its position accord with the narrative of the New Testament, which implies that the tomb was not in the town, John xi. 38."—*Robinson's Biblical Researches in Palestine*, vol. ii.

not prescribe what he should do; but submit the affecting case to his love, assured that he would instantly hasten to the sick-bed of his friend; or, at least, that he would speak the word which should at once raise him up. The messengers arrive, and tell their tale. He only remarks, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, and that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This was a word of comfort for the anxious sisters; yet, how severely were their faith and patience put to the test! They saw their brother get worse: hour after hour they waited for the Saviour; but he came not: at length their brother died. And where was Jesus all this time? He was staying "two days in the same place where he was." To avoid the persecutions of the Jews, he had retired beyond the river Jordan, as though he had forgotten the sickness of Lazarus. But his omniscient eye was upon the dwelling at Bethany: he knew all that was passing beneath its roof; the wasting strength and the sinking frame of his friend; the tears of the sisters, and the busy attentions of those waiting on the dying man. He still loved them, and sympathized with their condition; and only denied the blessing they asked, that he might bestow a greater.

It was not till Lazarus was buried that Jesus proposed to begin the journey of thirty miles to Bethany. This awakened the fears of the disciples: "Master, the Jews of late sought to slay thee, and goest thou thither again?" He chided their want of faith, and prepared their minds for what he was about do: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." Sleep is a Scripture emblem of death, and was in

common use as such among the Jews; so that we often meet with the expressions, "He fell asleep," and, "He slept with his fathers." Death to believers is only as sleep to the body. They rest from their labours and sorrows, and wait for the resurrection morning, when they shall arise from their earthly beds, clothed in immortal honour and glory.

"They sleep in Jesus, and are blest :
How sweet their slumbers are !
From suffering and from sin released,
And safe from every snare."

The disciples understood their Master to mean, that Lazarus was taking rest in sleep, which was regarded as a hopeful sign of recovery : "If he sleep, he shall do well;" for his distemper must be abated, and he probably is now fast recovering, so that it is needless for us to risk ourselves by venturing again among the Jews. They were then plainly told that Lazarus was dead; and that it was permitted he should die, that they might witness the power of Christ in raising him from the dead, after he had been four days in the grave. "I am glad, for your sakes, I was not there;" for then I should have been prevailed on to raise him while he was sick, and you would have lost the instructive lesson which I am now about to give. Finding their Lord resolved to go to Bethany, they express their readiness to follow him, even unto death; and they then prepare to depart into the land of Judea.

Martha and Mary, perhaps, had given up all hope of a visit from Jesus; nor do they appear to have had any expectation, that now their brother was dead, he would be raised again to life; and

yet, had they not heard of the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and of the son of the widow of Nain? Or had their grief so overwhelmed their minds, that they had forgotten these proofs of the power of Christ? They carried the body to the grave, according to the Jewish custom, a few hours after death, laid it in a cave without the city, and placed at the entrance a stone, to secure it from intrusion; and then returned to their homes, to mourn the loss of a pious and affectionate brother.

The Jews have always been distinguished for the honour they pay to the memory of the dead, and for the sympathy which they show for the bereaved. Friends and neighbours pressed around Martha and Mary, "to comfort them concerning their brother."* The well-known piety, hospitality, and station in life of Lazarus draw many to the spot.

At length, Jesus with his disciples drew nigh; news was brought privately to Martha that the Master was on his way to the house. She arose from the ground, and with all the speed that love could give, hastened to meet him. "But Mary sat still in the house"—the usual posture of mourners, surrounded by those who vainly endeavoured to administer comfort to her heart.

* "It was a common practice of the Jews, to condole with the bereaved after a funeral: they did not allow of it before. The first office of this kind was done when they returned from the grave: then the mourners stood in their place in a row, and all the people passed by: every man, as he came to the mourner, comforted him, and passed on. Besides these consolations, there were others at their own houses during the first week; and it was on the third day, more particularly, that these consolatory visits were paid. It was reckoned an act of great piety and mercy to comfort mourners."—*Gill*.

Martha expressed her mournful regret that he had not arrived before, to save her brother from death: yet her faith appears when she adds, "I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Jesus speaks to her as one in sorrow, who needed consolation. "Thy brother shall rise again." As he did not declare when her brother should rise, nor that he himself would bring him to life, she regarded the words only as a source of consolation arising out of the doctrine of the resurrection. He then declared that he had power in himself to raise the body from the grave, and to give it not only natural, but spiritual and eternal life: "I am the resurrection and the life." By me shall unnumbered millions of the children of men arise from the grave at the last day: can I not, then, break the bonds of death, and bring back one to life at the present time? "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Thus declaring the animating truth, that those who believe in Him, though their bodies return to the dust, their souls shall never die; they shall still live with him in glory.

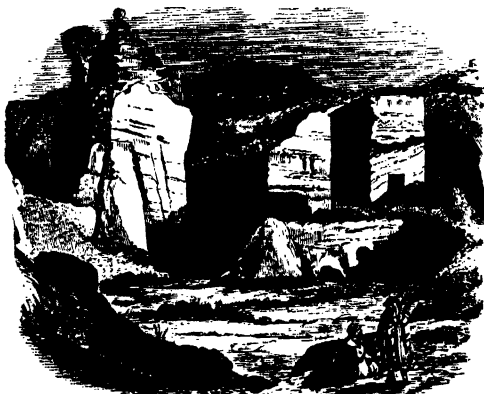
Martha expressed her faith in Christ as the Messiah, and having received some hope of her brother's present resurrection, she waited no longer, but ran to call her sister secretly, for fear of the Jews. When Mary heard the familiar words, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," she arose from the place where she had sat weeping, and went with her sister. The friends followed, supposing she was going to the grave to weep, as was the practice of eastern mourners, in particular on

the fourth day after burial. On their way they met Jesus, when a touching interview took place. He could not behold those he loved in deep sorrow without emotion. Human woe was not to him a matter of indifference: he groaned, he wept. Oh wondrous sight! the Son of God in tears! weeping with those that wept! Well did some of the spectators exclaim, "Behold, how he loved him!" But others stood unaffected at the sight, and scornfully said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died." Jesus again groaned; it was now on account of the hardness of their hearts, that their prejudice could interpret his tears into a proof of his weakness.

They now all come to the grave, and Jesus directed some that stood near, to take away the stone. He could have removed it away without their hands; yet he was pleased that they should have the evidence that the body was there, and was really dead. Martha, yet supposing it was too late, told her Lord that Lazarus had been now in the grave four days, and that, by this time, the body had become corrupt. What a lesson of humility! In how short a space of time after death are the loveliest features changed, and the strongest and fairest bodies turned to corruption! In a warm climate, like Judea, putrefaction is very rapid. The stone was taken away, and all stood around in awful suspense. Amidst the stillness, Jesus lifted up his voice in thanksgiving and prayer to his Father: not that he needed to pray to enable him to work the miracle; but he knew that many of the Jews ascribed his works to the devil; and thus, publicly to expose their

blasphemy, he lifted up his voice, "Because of the people, that they might believe that he was from God." It was a solemn appeal to God, to attest openly that he was the true Messiah.

And now, in his own name, and by his own power, he cried aloud that all might hear, "Lazarus, come forth!" His voice entered the dark



TOMBS CUT IN A ROCK, IN THE VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT.

sepulchre, struck on the "dull cold ear of death," corruption was stayed, in an instant the body moved from the stone slab on which it was placed, and appeared before them all. They were alarmed, and started back at the sight: no one approached to remove his bandages, until the voice of Jesus was again heard, "Loose him, and let him go."* The folds of linen that were wrap-

* "As the Jews did not make use of coffins, they placed their dead separately in niches, or little cells, cut into the sides of the caves, or rooms, which they had hewn in the rock.

ped around him were unloosed, and Lazarus was restored to freedom and to life. The sisters received their brother to their arms, and returned joyfully to their home. The afflicted family was now made happy; and soon after expressed their gratitude, by inviting Jesus to a supper, when Martha waited at the table, and Lazarus sat by the side of his Redeemer from death.

Were not all convinced who saw this undoubted proof, that Jesus was the Son of God? Some hardened their hearts, and went to the pharisees to tell them what had been done. The high court, or sanhedrim, was summoned; and, after deliberation, as the miracle could not be denied, they decided that Jesus ought to be put to death! Astonishing hardness of heart! They thus proved the truth of what our Lord had declared, that they would not be persuaded, though one arose from the dead, Luke xvi. 31.

The circumstances of this narrative supply many points for reflection.

1. It teaches us to trust in Divine providence, though it may appear dark and mysterious. How

This form of the Jewish sepulchre suggests an easy solution of a difficulty in the resurrection of Lazarus. The sacred historian states, that when our Lord cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth;' he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. Upon this circumstance, the enemies of revelation seize, and demand, with an air of triumph, how he should come out of a grave, who was bound hand and foot with grave clothes? But the answer is easy: The evangelist does not mean that Lazarus walked out of the sepulchre, but only that he sat up, then putting his legs over the niche, or cell, slid down, and stood upright upon the floor; all which he might easily do, notwithstanding his arms were bound close to his body, and his legs were tied together by means of the shroud and rollers with which he was swathed. Hence, when he was come forth, Jesus ordered the friends to loose him, and let him go."—*Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

trying to the sisters was the delay of Jesus ! They could not understand his conduct towards them, and perhaps thought he was unkind, and forgetful of their sorrows ; but, in the end, they were constrained to admire his wisdom, faithfulness, and love.

2. It instructs how we are to regard death. It is a sleep ; not a long eternal sleep, as infidels say ; but sweet repose to the believer, when neither temptation, sorrow, nor sin shall disturb his rest. “ Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them,” Rev. xiv. 13.

3. It encourages our faith in the Saviour. He will never forsake those who believe in him : he declared this to Martha in a promise, when he said, “ He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ;” and he confirmed it when he raised her brother from the tomb. If we also believe in him, he will raise us from the death of sin, to a life of holiness in this world, and to a life of glory in the world to come.

4. It proves to us the great love of Christ. The Jews were filled with surprise when they saw his tears, and said, “ Behold, how he loved him !” How much more should we admire his love, when we look to him crucified on the cross, not weeping tears, but pouring out his blood to take away our sins. “ Christ hath loved *us*, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,” Eph. v. 2.

5. It leads our thoughts forward to the resurrection day. Impressive as was the scene when Lazarus was called from the grave, how much

TWO BLIND BEGGARS RESTORED TO SIGHT. 189

more astonishing will it be, when all that have ever lived, millions on millions, shall start into life, at the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ! How great will be the joy of those who have loved and served the Saviour on earth, when they are called from their graves, to die no more! Lazarus and his sisters met to part again; after a few years of life, they died and were buried: those who now believe, when they rise at the resurrection morning, shall spend together one eternal day in heaven!

TWO BLIND BEGGARS RESTORED TO SIGHT.

MATT. XX. 29—34; MARK X. 46—52; LUKE XVIII. 35—43.

AFTER the raising of Lazarus, Jesus went to Jericho, the second city in the Holy Land. The place was memorable for the falling of its walls at the sounding of the trumpet, by the Jewish army, in the days of Joshua. It was often called the "city of palm trees," from these trees growing abundantly in the gardens and groves around the town, 2 Chron. xxviii. 15; Judg. i. 16; and was also famous for its balsam trees, which yielded an useful medicine. In the time of our Lord, it was the principal residence of the priests, of whom several thousands lived within its walls; it also possessed a royal palace.*

* The glory of Jericho has long ago departed: it is now an almost deserted village of fifty or sixty miserable Arab houses; the walls, of which on three sides are of stones piled up, mostly not so high as a man's head, and the front and top either entirely open, or covered with brush-wood. "I had mounted to the top of the old fortress, and looked out upon the extensive plains of Jericho, without meeting a single person; and it was not until I had gone out of the gate that I noticed the remarkable circumstance, so different from the usual course of matters in Arab villages, that no throng of idlers had gathered round me. In fact,

* Christ drew nigh to the city, followed by a great multitude of people ; for the recent miracle at Bethany, had added considerably to his train. Near the way side sat two blind beggars, listening to the footsteps of each passenger, and ready to raise their imploring cry as he approached. One of these men was named Bartimeus, or the "son of Timeus," who appears to have been well known, either from his former condition in life, or some other circumstance. The affliction of blindness has been placed among the most distressing of human life, and has been feelingly alluded to by a poet, who was himself deprived of sight.

" O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon
Irrecoverably dark ; total eclipse,
Without the hope of day !
The sun to me is dark,
And silent as the moon
When she deserts the night."—MILTON.

How greatly is this calamity increased, when to it are added the sorrows of poverty !

The sound of numerous feet, and the clamour of many voices, drew the attention of the blind what great person was on the road, attended by this great throng of people? They were told it was Jesus of Nazareth, the great Prophet, who

I had passed through the village, gone to the fortress, and come back, without seeing a man, and soon found that there was not a male in the village above ten years old, except the aga, and one passing Arab. It had numbered sixty men, of whom Ibrahim Pacha had ordered a levy of twenty-four for his army. The miserable inhabitants had decided among themselves, upon nineteen who could be best spared ; and, unable to supply the rest, in a spirit of desperation had abandoned their village ; and taking with them all the boys above ten years old, fled to the mountains around the Dead Sea, where they were now in arms, ripe for rebellion, robbery, and murder."—*Stephens' Incidents of Travel in the Holy Land.*

had just raised Lazarus from the dead, and who had done so many surprising miracles. Oh, good news! hope dawned upon their minds, and at once they cried aloud, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" and then repeated their prayer, "Have mercy on us, O Lord!"

Who could be so unfeeling as to suppress this cry of misery? Yet there were those in this crowd who harshly required them to hold their peace; and who, forgetful or regardless of what had already been done for the blind, sought to suppress their cries for help. Would they deprive them of the opportunity which was now given them to obtain their sight, because it might stay the throng for a few moments on their journey? It is difficult to account for this conduct of the multitude. Bartimeus, however, regarded not their rebuke: his case was urgent, the occasion was precious, and he called louder and more fervently than before: "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." It was the cry of misery, the prayer of faith; and though it only came from the lips of a poor beggar, it arrested the Saviour in his course: it was impossible for him to pass on without turning an eye of compassion towards him who uttered it. And is he not still well pleased with those who are earnest and fervent in their cry to him for mercy? Can he, even now in heaven, remain indifferent to the humble prayer of faith? "Prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it," Mal. iii. 10.

Jesus stood still: the crowd gathered around to see what he would do, when he commanded the men to be called. The people, expecting a

miracle, said to the blind, "Be of good cheer; rise, he calleth thee." In a moment, Bartimeus threw aside his garment, the outer robe which was thrown loosely over him, and which was commonly laid aside when a person ran, and hastened to Jesus, followed by his afflicted companion. The call was an earnest of their cure: he would not have invited them to his feet, only to expose their misery, and mock their hopes. They bend before him, and present their sightless eye-balls to his view. For a moment their faith is tried: he would have them again tell what they want: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Is it money you solicit? With united voice they cry, "Lord, open our eyes;" for our sight is more to us than gold or rubies.

He could no longer delay: they had expressed their faith in his power; had owned him publicly as the Messiah; and now lay lowly before him. As he touched their eyes, their sight instantly returned. Overjoyed at their deliverance, the men followed in his train, and joined with the multitude in glorifying God. Thus attended, the Saviour passed through the crowded streets of Jericho.

1. If we are as much concerned for the salvation of our souls as these blind men were for the recovery of their sight, let us do as they did; for Jesus is now passing by, and we shall never have a better opportunity than that we have to-day.

2. The crowd would have silenced Bartimeus; but he threw aside his robe at the invitation of Christ, and cast himself before him, asking for mercy. The world and Satan would stifle the cry of the convinced sinner; but he must not

allow them to hinder him in his coming to the Saviour. "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 1, 2.

BUYERS AND SELLERS DRIVEN OUT OF THE
TEMPLE A SECOND TIME.

MATT. XXI. 12, 13; MARK XI. 15—19; LUKE XIX. 45, 46.

OUR Lord, on his return to Jerusalem, was attended by an increasing throng. He entered it as the King of Zion, and his trophies were such as became the Prince of peace: those once dumb, lame, blind, and possessed by Satan, were doubtless among those who swelled his triumphal procession. The concourse and noise excited the whole city; while to the inquiry, "Who is this?" the people joyfully answered, "Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Entering the city at the eastern gate, he alighted from the colt on which he rode, and passed on to the temple.

Three years before, at the beginning of his ministry, (see p. 23,) he had driven out the buyers and sellers from the holy place; but the corrupt priests, for the sake of profit, had allowed it again to be profaned. As he entered the spacious court of the Gentiles, he beheld it turned into a cattle-market, and a place where money-brokers carried on their extortions. The pavement of the court was covered with their stalls and stands; and folds for sheep, cages of pigeons, and groups of oxen, tied to the pillars of the house, occupied the sacred inclosure. If the pious proselytes, for whom this part of the temple was designed could find a

place for prayer and meditation, yet as they saw the smoke of the sacrifices ascending from the distant altar, their devotions were interrupted by the bleatings and lowings of the animals, and the clamour of the people engaged in traffic.

With Divine majesty in his countenance, Jesus at once proceeded to cast out the buyers and sellers from the holy place, again charging them with making it a den of thieves; referring, it has been thought, to the dens and caves in Judea, where robbers lay in wait to attack unwary passengers: so they were on the watch to practise their frauds on the unsuspecting Jews, who came from distant parts to worship in the temple. This host of men, who would probably have resisted a band of Roman soldiers, and who loved their money as their own lives, yet fled, leaving their gold and silver behind them scattered on the ground, at the sight of Him who was armed only with a whip of small cords. No one dared resist; all were awed and confounded at his presence.

If the sight of Jesus was so terrible when he drove these wicked men before him, though he appeared as man in humble form, how shall sinners stand before him when he ascends his great white throne? Then shall the wicked call "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 16, 17.

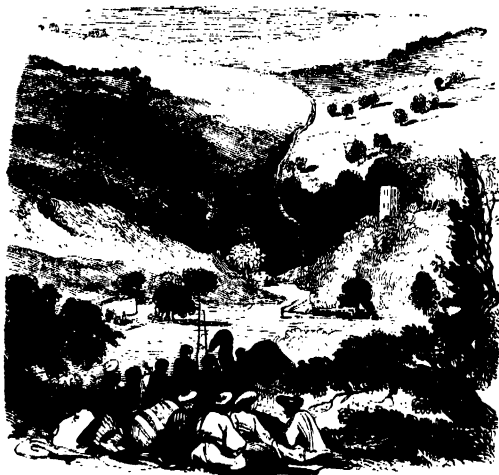
Some have observed, that when our Saviour first performed the great work of casting out the buyers and sellers from the temple, he called it his Father's house; but now, having proved by his

miracles his Divine power, he said, "MY house," claiming equality and unity with the Father.

MANY MIRACLES IN THE TEMPLE.

Around the temple doors the blind and lame commonly waited, to solicit charity: no sooner were the money-changers and traffickers cast out, than the afflicted entered, and presented themselves before Christ. They feared not to approach; nor had the scene Jesus had just beheld disturbed his spirits, and indisposed him to relieve them. The scourge of cords was laid aside; and he willingly turned from an act of judgment to do works of mercy. Not one miserable object applied in vain: "he healed them all." Infant voices are now heard sounding Hosannas through the courts of the temple; and soon around the Saviour are gathered groups of smiling children, offering their early praises, singing aloud, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Retiring from the temple, Jesus passed through Jerusalem, and went to Bethany





MOUNT OLIVET.

CHAPTER XIII.

Barren fig tree withered—An emblem of the Jewish nation—A lesson for all—Garden of Gethsemane—The armed band confounded and overthrown—Malchus' ear healed—Miracles at the crucifixion—Resurrection and ascension of Christ—His glory, power, and compassion exhibited—Free access to the Saviour—Importance of faith—Where all the miracles will be known.

THE BARREN FIG TREE WITHERED.

MATT. xxi. 18—22; MARK xi. 12—14, 20—24.

THE greater part of the Jews, as has been seen, refused Christ as the Messiah. For upwards of three years he had been the Prophet in their midst, teaching, inviting, and warning them. Many wonderful works had been done before

their eyes, which they could not deny, and yet they would not believe, John xii. 37. These miracles had hitherto been marked by the purest benevolence, and were calculated to subdue their prejudices, enlighten their minds, and win their confidence to him; still they persisted in not only rejecting him, but in seeking his death.

The parable of the barren fig tree, Luke xiii. 6—9, was spoken to forewarn them of coming wrath: and now, that they might learn from actions as well as words, Christ put forth his power in judgment, though there was a merciful design even when he appeared most severe.

At the close of the day on which he cast out the buyers and sellers from the temple, Jesus went to Bethany. It would appear, that, during his visits to Jerusalem, he took up his abode in this village: and it has been specially noticed, that, from this time till his crucifixion, which happened six days after, he retired every evening to Bethany. Most likely, he found a home with the family of Lazarus.

He had, probably, left the village shortly after sunrise to return to the city, and before he had broken his fast, so that while on the road, he felt the want of food. As man, he had human wants, which were supplied in a natural way. To satisfy his hunger, he might have produced a supply by miracle; but he never wrought miracles when there was not an important end to be secured by them. As he came nigh to Jerusalem, he saw a fig tree by the road side, and went towards it. Its spreading branches, and thick foliage, gave promise that so flourishing a tree would yield an abundance of fruit. It was only the spring time of the year, and the

season for gathering the full crop of fruit had not arrived ; yet, as the fig tree puts forth its figs at the same time as, or even before, its leaves, it was only reasonable to suppose there was also fruit to be found on its luxuriant branches.* Besides, as the season for gathering was not yet, it could not be said that the figs had been taken off the tree. Nor was it an unusual circumstance for fruit trees to be found growing by the road side ; as the Jews regarded it as an act of charity to plant them there, for the use of travellers.

Our Lord, doubtless, knew that it was barren ; but he intended to impress a great moral lesson on those that were with him, and accordingly approached it, that its state might be known to all. As his disciples gathered around the tree, they perceived that it was destitute of fruit. Jesus then solemnly said, " Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever."

Another day and night had passed away, when the following morning saw our Lord again on his way from his lodging in the village to the great city. The attention of the disciples was naturally drawn to the fig tree ; the sentence which their Master had passed on its barren boughs could not well be forgotten by them. When, lo ! as they

* " The first ripe figs may be found a month, six weeks, or more, before the full season. No sooner do these draw to perfection, than the summer fig, the same that is preserved and sold by the grocers, begins to be formed, though it rarely ripens before August : about which time, the same tree frequently throws out a third crop, or the winter fig, as we may call it. It is well known that the fruit of this prolific plant does always precede the leaves ; and, consequently, when our Saviour saw one of them in full vigour, having leaves, he might, according to the common course of things, very justly look for fruit."—*Dr. Shaw's Travels.*

came nigh, they beheld it "dried up from the roots." The drying up was the more remarkable, as this tree is known for its abundance of sap and moisture.

The disciples were astonished, and exclaimed, "Master! behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away!"

"Why was it, Lord, that thou thy stern decree
 Didst thus pronounce on that unfruitful tree?
 For well we know, in every deed of thine,
 To light our eyes, the beams of wisdom shine.
 Was it that they, who long had seen thee pour
 Life, health, and gladness, from thy mercy's store,
 And mark'd, where'er thy pilgrimage was bent,
 That goodness track'd thy footsteps as they went;
 Might read no less in that expressive sign,
 That power to punish, as to save, was thine;
 That thine the key of suffering, as of joy;
 That thou who life couldst give, could also life destroy?"

It must, however, be observed, that it was not an act of passionate disappointment in him to curse the tree, because he found no fruit thereon, as some infidels have wickedly asserted. There was always a calm dignity in all he did; he never fell into sinful anger; he had no revengeful feelings to gratify: but the withering of this tree was to be a means of instruction to his disciples, to the nation of the Jews, and to men in every age.

1. This fig tree was an emblem of the Jewish nation. They had long been planted in a favoured spot, and enjoyed special privileges: and though they had the leaves of religious profession, they bore not the fruits of faith, love, and holiness. Soon, however, the Divine judgments would wither and destroy them as a nation, like as the disciples had seen the fig tree decay before their eyes.

2. This fact is not without a moral lesson to all, especially to those who live in a Christian land. We have been planted in a land of privilege; much culture has been bestowed on us, that we might bring forth fruit to the glory of God; how guilty, then, shall we be, if we are found with only a barren profession! "Because of unbelief they (the Jews) were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee," Rom xi. 20, 21.

3. Is it the spring time of life? Christ expects to find fruit on the young trees planted in his vineyard, before the autumn of age arrives. It was not because the tree bore poisonous fruit that it was destroyed; but because it was barren: so it will be found, that those who are without the fruits of holiness, as well as those who bear the corrupt fruits of sin, fall alike under the displeasure of God. It was the servant who made no use of his talent that was delivered to the tormentors.

MIRACLES IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

MATT. xxvi. 51—54; MARK xiv. 46—50; LUKE xxii. 47—51;
JOHN xviii. 3—11.

THE last night of our Saviour's sojourn on earth had arrived. The evening he spent in the company of eleven of his disciples, and with them kept the passover. As darkness drew on, he retired with them to a place, at the foot of mount Olivet, called the garden of Gethsemane. Eight of the number were left near the entrance, while Jesus taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into a remote part of the garden. As he went

he began to show signs of deep anguish; and leaving the three disciples, he proceeded to a secluded spot, by himself, where his soul was overwhelmed with intense agony. Was it the fear of death that lay heavy on the Saviour's soul? Was it the dread of the pain, and shame, and torment of his approaching crucifixion, that brought the drops of blood from his exhausted body? These may, in part, have affected his mind; but it was chiefly the sad weight of the sins of mankind, and the heavy burden of his Father's wrath for those sins, that pressed him to the earth.

During this hour of suffering, the traitor Judas, who had agreed with the chief priests, for thirty pieces of silver, to betray his Master into their hands, arrived at the spot. He led on a band of Roman soldiers, and a multitude of other persons armed with swords and staves, and also carrying torches and lamps in their hands. Silently they traced their way amidst the trees of the garden, when Jesus advanced towards them, and asked, "Whom seek ye?" They exclaimed, "We seek Jesus of Nazareth." With composure and majesty, he replied, "I am he!" No sooner had he thus spoken, than they started back, terrified at the sight of Him who stood before them unarmed and unguarded, and then fell prostrate on the ground. It was the secret energy of his Divine power that thus confounded and overthrew these wicked men. When armed bands were sent to seize the prophet Elijah, fire from heaven consumed them, 2 Kings i.; but the mercy and forbearance of our Lord towards his greatest enemies are now seen, in sparing those lives which he might have cut off in their sins. Or he could have

baffled their designs, deprived them of their sight, or their strength, or their reason, and escaped out of their hands; but his "hour was come;" and having given this proof of his miraculous power, he withdrew the secret energy which restrained them. It is surprising, that after what they had experienced, they could again attempt to effect their base design. They, however, no sooner arose from the ground, than recovering from their terror, and urged on by their leaders, they rudely seize the Saviour, and begin to bind him as a common felon.

It was now that Peter, under a momentary impulse of attachment to his Master, and of resentment for the insults done to him, drew one of the two swords the disciples had carried with them into the garden, Luke xxii. 38. As the crowd violently rushed upon the Lord, the strong arm of Peter was raised, the blow fell upon Malchus, a servant, or slave, of the high priest, and struck off his right ear. This man was probably among the most active in rudely seizing Jesus. Peter might have supposed that, aided by Divine power, few as were the disciples, they should be able to destroy this band of armed men. He was at once restrained from further violence; and now the wonderful compassion of the Saviour appeared. "Suffer ye thus far," he cried amidst the strife: they were probably binding him with cords, and he asked for a moment's liberty, that he might heal the wounded man. He had resigned the power of saving himself, yet still showed his willingness to do good to others, even to an enemy. He touched the wounded part, the blood stopped flowing, and Malchus was healed. A word of

reproof was given to the rash disciple; while, at the same time, Jesus meekly declared that if he pleased, he could command the protection of twelve legions* of angels, and needed not to be defended by twelve weak disciples: "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? The cup (of suffering) which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" Scarcely had he given this new instance of his goodness, than all his disciples forsook him, and fled; while the rude soldiery, triumphing over their prey, dragged him, oppressed and exhausted, to the house of Annas.

MIRACLES AT THE CRUCIFIXION.

MATT. xxvii. 51—53; MARK xv. 38; LUKE xxiii. 44, 45;

MIRACLES marked the death of our Lord, as they had done his life. His unjust judge condemned him to be crucified—a death painful and disgraceful, such as was endured by slaves and the most abandoned criminals. They had nailed his hands and feet to the cross, and around his head they had placed a crown of thorns. Three hours slowly passed away amidst increasing pain; his body was dried up with burning fever, and wrung with acute agony, from the unnatural position in which it was placed. His dying lips affectionately addressed his mother, and his disciple John; he had spoken of mercy to the penitent thief; the executioners had cast lots on his garment; and

* A legion was a large division of the Roman army, containing six thousand men: twelve legions would therefore be seventy-two thousand. One angel destroyed the whole of Sennacherib's army; what a body guard would this large angelic host have proved to Jesus

he had borne the cruel mockery of the rabble who gathered around the cross. The sixth hour of the day arrived: it was high noon, the heat of the midday sun was at its height, and added to the sufferings of the dying Saviour, "whose strength was dried up like a potsherd," Psa. xxii. 15: but now a change took place in the sky. A thick darkness, like the gloom of midnight, gathered around Calvary, and spread over the whole land of Judea: a darkness, probably, like that which shrouded Egypt in the days of Moses, Exodus x. 21. From what cause did this arise? It was not an eclipse; for it was the time of *full* moon, when the sun and moon are in opposition; and the sun can only be eclipsed at the period of *new* moon, when these orbs are in conjunction. Neither could the shadows of an eclipse last for three hours: the darkness seldom lasts more than a quarter of an hour; nor would it have produced so dense a gloom as that which shrouded the cross. It was a miracle, attesting the dignity of Him who was now in the pains of death. This darkness was ordained of God, and foretold by prophets: see Amos viii. 9, and Joel ii. 30—32, compared with Acts ii. 16—20.

The terror of the darkness was increased when Jesus yielded up his spirit. The rocks around the city were torn asunder by an earthquake, throwing open the graves, and exposing to view the dead bodies contained within them. This had been also predicted, Hag. ii. 6, 7, 21, compared with Heb. xii. 26, 27. And after the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the bodies of many pious persons arose from these graves, entered Jerusalem, and appeared unto many. It is to be

distinctly marked, that they did not rise till the Lord had broken asunder the bands of death: "He was the first-fruits of them that slept," 1 Cor. xv. 20. Who they were that arose, we cannot tell: they were probably pious Jews, who had not long been laid in the tombs, for they were known to those dwelling in Jerusalem.

Another sign marked this solemn period. In the temple, between the "holy place," and the "holy of holies," was suspended a large veil, or curtain, made of the richest and strongest tapestry, and curiously wrought, Exod. xxvi. 31—33. The Jewish writers state, that it was so large, and of so strong a fabric, that it took twenty men to open it, when the high priest, once in the course of a year, on the great day of atonement, entered within this enclosure, with incense and blood in his hands. When the Saviour bowed his head and died, this veil was rent in two pieces, from the top to the bottom. It was the time of evening sacrifice, and the priests were in the "holy place," trimming the sacred lamps, and offering incense before the Lord.

There is reason to conclude, that these prodigies made no impression on Caiaphas, and the other priests. They had become familiar with miracles, and attempted to satisfy themselves that those done by Christ were not by the power of God. If men oppose the truth, God may, in justice, give them up to blindness of mind and hardness of heart.

Conviction, however, was forced on the mind of the heathen centurion, who commanded the soldiers engaged in the crucifixion, who, when "he saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, feared greatly, and glorified God, saying,

Certainly this was a righteous man! Truly this man was the Son of God! And all the people that came together to that sight, smote their breasts, and returned."

In this solemn manner was it declared that Jesus was the Messiah. Nor were these wonders without a meaning. The sun was darkened; for the light of the world was setting under the deep cloud of his humiliation. The veil of the temple was rent and thrown open, to denote that the mysteries which had hitherto been hid in types and ceremonies, were now fully revealed, and that a new way of access to God was opened to all through the death of Christ. The earthquake "signified 'the removing of those things that are shaken,' an earthly tabernacle and the Jewish economy, 'as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken,' the Christian dispensation, 'may remain,' Heb. xii. 26, 27."*

MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

JOHN xxi. 1—14.

AFTER Christ had risen from the dead, by his own power—which was in itself the greatest of miracles—he appeared to his disciples at eight distinct times. It was on the seventh of his visits that he gave them a closing display of his power and goodness.

On the night in which he was betrayed, he promised his disciples that he would meet them again in Galilee, Mark xiv. 28; on the morning of the resurrection, the angel at the sepulchre reminded them of this promise, Mark xvi. 7; and this message was given to the Marys when Jesus met them

* Simeon.

in the garden, after he had risen; "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me," Matt. xxviii. 10. In obedience to this command, the disciples left Judea, and proceeded to the upper province. They were now without the means of support, and Peter proposed to return to the employment of a fisherman, to provide for their wants. For a whole night they toiled, and caught nothing. As the morning drew on, Jesus stood upon the sea shore; yet not expecting them to meet him, or it being only the grey dawn of the morning, they knew not who it was that was the spectator of their toil. He kindly inquired what they had to eat; they tell of their lost labour. Still they knew not who it was that spake to them. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They obeyed, and were not able to draw their net to land, so great was the multitude of fishes inclosed within it.*

John knew by this sign that it was the Lord who stood before them. It was the very same kind of miracle that he had wrought when he had called them to the work of apostles, (see page 32.) Peter, perhaps remembering the look of love and

* In the time of the apostles, when Palestine was thickly peopled, and fish was an important article of traffic, large numbers of fishermen were employed on this lake, so that it was continually drained of its finny tenants. It was not, therefore, an unlikely circumstance for the apostles to toil all the night, and catch nothing; and this made the miracle the more evident.

The case is different now. "This fine piece of water abounds with a great variety of excellent fish; but from the poverty, and we must add, the ignorance and indolence of the people who live on its borders, there is not a boat or raft, either large or small, through its whole extent. Some few years since, a boat did exist here, but being broken up from decay, has never been replaced; so that the few fish which are now and then taken, are caught by lines from the shore, nets never being used."—*Buckingham's Travels.*

forgiveness in the judgment hall, and regardless of danger, plunged into the sea, and rushed towards his Lord. The other disciples soon came to land, where they saw a fire of coals, already prepared for them, and fish laid on it, and bread nigh at hand. "Come, and dine," said Jesus—refresh yourselves after your night's toil. They were filled with awe, when they saw their Master take the food, as he had been accustomed, bless it, and share it among them. This was a new miracle. It could not have been a fire which the disciples had made, for it is noticed as something new; besides they had caught no fish, and here were fish on the fire, and bread for all to eat. The whole appears to have been miraculously prepared by Christ.* Thus did their Lord show, to the last, his care for them, and encourage them to trust in him to supply their wants in all future times of need.

On the fortieth day after the resurrection, the Saviour met a large number of believers, and gave them his last instructions. While he was discoursing with them, he lifted up his hands, and blessed them; and while they looked upon him, he gently ascended from the earth, and "a cloud received him out of their sight." He ascended to his glory, the glory he had with the Father before all worlds:—

"The head that once was crown'd with thorns,
Is crown'd with glory now:
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Saviour's brow.

"The highest place that heaven affords,
Is his by sovereign right:
The King of kings, and Lord of lords,
He reigns in glory bright."

Christ is not now walking the earth, as when,

* Doddridge; A. Clarke.

more than eighteen hundred years ago, he trod the mountains and valleys of Palestine. He is not now touching the eyes of the blind, healing the leper, and raising the dead. The words of heavenly wisdom which accompanied his miracles are not now heard. No longer the Man of sorrows, without a home, scorned and opposed: he is now on his eternal throne; all creation is under his control; hosts of angels obey his will; he possesses almighty power and majesty; is infinitely happy in himself, and the source of happiness to all in heaven. Yet, in the height of his glory, he still remembers the days of his humiliation; and the miracles he wrought are still before him, as though they were of yesterday.

We have now arrived at the close of the Gospel miracles, and have seen that they are not only interesting as narratives; but are valuable as conveying to us moral and spiritual lessons. We have found that they are not mere history—things remote, in which we have no personal interest; but that every one who reads or hears the sacred page is deeply concerned in these recorded facts. They confirm to us the mission of the Saviour; they show his majesty and glory, his tenderness and compassion. Some teach us important truths; and others are typical, or illustrative of his grace. And the whole are designed to show our need of him, and to encourage us in the exercise of faith. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," John xx. 31.

Let us, first, regard them as exhibiting the *glory*

of Christ. There were few marks of splendour by which the Son of God was attended when on earth; his glory was not that of royalty. The glory that attended his path through this world was more than human; it was unlike every thing before it, and all that has been since. All nature obeyed his word, evil spirits did homage at his feet, and the invisible world was under subjection to him. He not only healed diseases; he raised the dead, he created. He forgave sin; and "who can forgive sins but God?" From the "beginning of miracles," when he turned water into wine, every following instance was an additional proof that he is God; the whole, taken together, are a convincing body of evidence of his true and proper Divinity.

The miracles of Jesus illustrate his *power*. Observe their diversity: it could not be said by his enemies that he had some secret means, by which he cured a few particular diseases; for no means, nor medicine, could have relieved cases so different, and of so long standing. Not a single individual returned home with the bitter reflection, that his case was beyond Christ's power to heal. He as easily cast out a legion as he did one evil spirit; there was no more difficulty with him in healing the man who had been afflicted thirty and eight years, than if he had been diseased only as many hours; he as readily raised Lazarus after corruption had commenced, as if the spirit had only left the body for one hour, or one minute. What encouragement is here for the penitent! Jesus has all power to subdue and pardon sin, Matt. xxviii. 18; Acts v. 31: it may have been great, and aggravated, and long-continued; yet

no sinner is beyond the power of Christ to save. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him," Heb. vii. 25.

The Gospel miracles show us the *compassion* of Christ. The objects of his grace were always the miserable. He "WENT ABOUT doing good," travelling from one part of the land to the other, seeking out the afflicted, and healing them of their diseases, "without money and without price:" emblematical of the freeness with which the richer blessings of the gospel are bestowed. Every appeal to his compassion was answered: and did he heal the body, and will he not care for the soul's? The soul is precious in his sight. He knows its infinite value, for he made it: he saw it ready to perish, and he gave himself as a sacrifice, that he might save it from eternal wrath. It is, therefore, certain that as he never cast out one that went to him for a bodily cure, so he will not reject any who now go to him for spiritual blessings. He has himself declared it: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37.

Doubtless, if Jesus were now on earth, as he was once, many would flock to him. What they find recorded of him in the Scriptures, would be to them a sufficient warrant. It is our happiness that he is not on earth in bodily form. If he were now walking through the villages of the Holy Land, how few could approach to him! Millions in England, and other countries on the earth, would be separated from him by many hundred miles, and by wide seas. He is not there; he is in heaven; and from all parts of the world, at the same instant of time, sinners may call upon him,

and their prayers shall find access to his gracious ear.

When he dwelt with man, he delighted to put honour upon faith : he delights to honour it now “ Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,” John xx. 29. All who came to him felt their disease ; so sinners, when under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, feel the misery of their sin, are drawn to the Saviour, and, through faith, are saved. They find that they are trusting Him who has proved his power and compassion ; who still encourages all that sincerely seek, and welcomes all that come.

Thus have the recorded miracles supplied grounds of confidence in the Son of God, as the Saviour of the world, and presented him as claiming our affectionate and highest reverence ; but the evangelist declares, “ There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written,” John xxi. 25. The knowledge of these may be reserved for the heavenly world : there all the miracles, discourses, parables, and events, in the life of our Lord may be made known to the saints, to his eternal praise and to their perpetual joy and instruction.



